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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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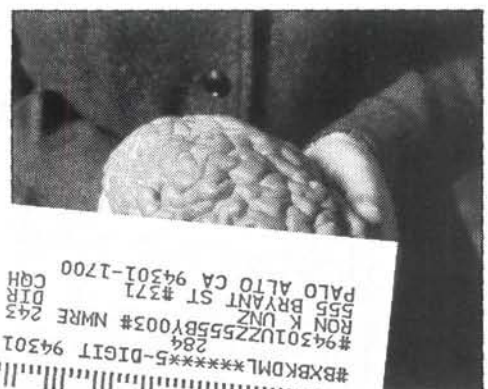

EXCLUSIVE STORY BY MICHAEL LEWIS

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APRIL 19, 1993

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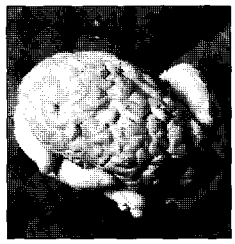

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CORRESPONDENCE

Aliens too

To the editors:

Linda Chavez's obsession with the continued flow of Hispanic immigrants ("Just Say Latino," March 22) has become intolerable. Chavez implies that the affirmative action recommendation to the D.C. government from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights supports the hiring of people who reside in this country illegally. Actually, the commission is supporting the hiring of *legal* Latinos to essential city service positions in numbers proportional to their population in the city, in order that these departments might better fulfill their duty for all the residents of Washington.

The presence of Latinos, both legal and illegal, in the cities of our nation is a reality. And children born in the United States, regardless of their parents' residential status, are citizens and should have full access to all the rights thereof. To deny that society has a responsibility to help provide for those who—often due to racial and cultural discrimination, as the commission found—cannot yet provide for themselves in this country reflects Chavez's myopic, anachronistic pull-yourselves-up-by-your-bootstraps theories. Humanitarian reasons aside, it simply makes fiscal sense to invest in preventing problems before it becomes necessary to pay for the mop-up of social explosions—as events in South-Central L.A. should have taught us.

Perhaps Chavez and conservatives like her should examine the policies of the United States that have led to the continuing immigration of people from Latin America in the first place. The fact that most Central Americans in the United States today are refugees from the social and economic conditions caused by our foreign policy in that region during the 1980s should tell her something. And to gripe about the low level of education that these refugees bring to the United States is even more hypocritical, when the Reagan and Bush administrations went to such pains to provide armies in that region with the means to destroy the very fabric of the social life that could have provided educations in these countries.

The massive influx of immigrants to U.S. urban areas does present us with some very real and complex social problems. Yet the way to deal with them isn't to stoke the flames beneath existing inner-city tensions, but to develop programs that create jobs and ensure structural equality in our government and social service institutions—and to give energy to these programs through multiracial, community-based coalitions of people working for the common good in the barrio.

AARON GALLEGOS
Washington, D.C.

Street talk

To the editors:

It's hard to think of a statement much more absurd than Mickey Kaus's "[Cynthia Grant] Bowman ignores the possibility that a 'reasonable woman' might ever *want* men to hit on her" ("Street Hassle," TRB, March 22). By a gang of ugly mugs hanging out on a streetcorner somewhere? Sure, friend. Excuse my paranoia, but this sounds suspiciously like the ever popular "I raped her because she wanted it" defense. And no, the harm caused by sexual harassment is *not* exaggerated. I have been on the receiving end more times than I care to mention. It is humiliating, frightening and inexcusable, and the suggestion that feminists such as Bowman are overreacting to it truly galls me. As for the question of such comments being "freedom of speech," Kaus seems oblivious to the wisdom of the old adage, "Your right to swing your fist ends with my face."

REGINA RANDOLPH
Albany, California

To the editors:

I am puzzled by why TNR has chosen comparatively innocuous examples of the things male strangers say to women on the street such as "bitch," "nice tits" and "fuck you." I have to assume that by understating the case you are either trying to weaken the arguments of women who are distressed by this behavior or that your publishing policy won't allow you to print the real filth.

For the record, however, in my personal experience, two of the most common statements in New York these days are "Sit on my face" and "Suck my dick." And they are not called out, they are whispered right into the victim's ear.

I am as concerned as anyone about the constitutional ramifications of drawing the line separating out language that is too offensive for society to bear. However, we must discuss the issue honestly. By putting obscene statements like those I have mentioned in the same category as wolf whistles, you are perpetu-

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ating a myth that this behavior is men's clumsy but endearing way of expressing admiration, and that only frigid or humorless women would object to it. I'm sure it isn't your true intention to continue this trend of blaming women for the things some men do to them. Let's just not be disingenuous about the issue.

MELANIE DEXTER
Ithaca, New York

Digs

To the editors:

Imagine my surprise seeing myself described in the March 1 "Notebook" as a "political hack." The anonymous author never called me to find out what I had done in my job at the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Here are some of the facts that your reporter would have discovered: I am a lifelong Democrat, yet I took a position in a Republican administration because I wanted to become involved in helping to solve the problems of the inner cities. I had spent twenty-five years recruiting athletes, many from crime and drug-infested urban areas. I spent countless hours sitting in living rooms in nearly every city in the country, talking to mothers, fathers, grandmothers, aunts and uncles, about a college education. Yes, a college education, because basketball was merely a means to that end. I promised the parents this and I delivered; every player who played for me for four years graduated.

I then went to work at ONDCP. My job was to bolster the "Seed" side of the fledgling "Weed and Seed" program. After blighted neighborhoods received some federal help in cleaning out drugs, they could be "seeded" with a variety of things to help those already hurt by drugs and to keep kids off drugs: treatment centers, after-school programs, safe havens, one-stop assistance centers, job-training, to name a few. Money would come from the federal government, from private business, from individual donations. My goal was to get everyone to "cross the street" and donate something—time or money—to our nation's cities. Although I am now off the federal payroll, I am continuing with projects in Benton Harbor, Michigan.

I expected better of THE NEW REPUBLIC. You are not usually so driven by partisan politics that you take unsubstantiated cheap shots. I expected that before damaging my reputation and disparaging my work, you would have looked into what I had done.

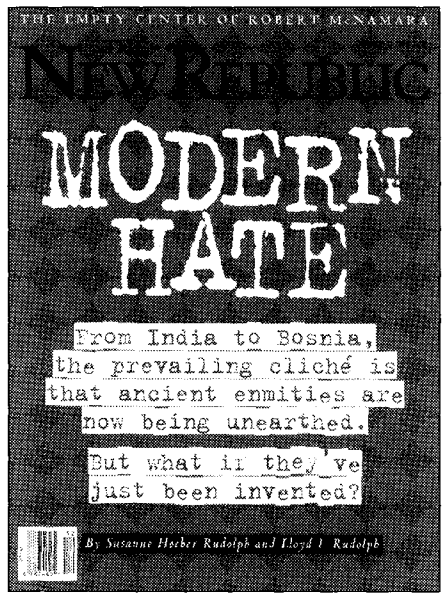
RICHARD "DIGGER" PHELPS
South Bend, Indiana

Creationists in tweed

To the editors:

I inhabit the "tweedy world" of an Ivy League university and can assure Anthony Grafton ("The Sense of an Ending," March 8) that creationists abound in these institutions as well. Students thirst for something to believe in. If it's the Bible, and a literal interpretation thereof, so be it. The professors (whom the students hardly ever see) aren't supplying an alternative. The Bible is better than nothing. Darwinism doesn't conquer death, after all, nor evil.

DANIEL R. VINING JR.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania


THE EMPTY CENTER OF ROBERT MCNAMARA
NEW REPUBLIC
MODERN HATE
From India to Bosnia, the prevailing cliché is that ancient enmities are now being unearthed. But what if they've just been invented?
By Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph

Crossroads

To the editors:

Congratulations on exposing Eric Clapton as a man with a notorious racist past (Notebook, March 22), a classic miniature piece of sleaze journalism. In a 1989 interview on NPR's "Fresh Air" program, which was recently rebroadcast, Clapton put the Birmingham incident down to the fact that he was very drunk that night and didn't know what he was saying. Of course, being drunk doesn't excuse anyone from making racist remarks; but you might have mentioned Clapton's inebriation to put his remarks into context. You might also have pointed out that they are utterly inconsistent with every other public statement he has ever made and with his long-standing campaign to bring to public attention the black blues artists who are his chief inspiration. It is, in fact, preposterous to suggest that Clapton had anything to prove by playing at the 1989 concert for Nelson Mandela at Wembley Stadium. He had already given the public every reason to assume that he was a fervent supporter of racial equality, the drunken outburst at Birmingham notwithstanding.

In any case, what's the justification for digging up 17-year-old dirt and rubbing it in the man's face?

GABRIEL HÜTTER
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Crying fowl

To the editors:

What have we done to deserve this? As a veterinarian, I am entirely fed up with being an easy target for some ill-informed writer. I am of course referring to Jim Holt's article "Pet Shop Joys" (March 8).

Instead of expressing gratitude to the doctor that saved his friend's Pomeranian, Holt just moaned about the fee. He then proceeded to mock the caring displayed by the veterinarian who cared for his bird ... and then questioned his integrity and honesty by suggesting that he just "threw the bum bird out the window."

For your information, this is a profession composed of hard-working, committed, tired and entirely underpaid people. We chose this profession out of deep concern and caring for our non-human fellow beings. Frankly, there's a lot more prestige and money in human medicine.

If you think it's so easy ... let's see you clip the nails of a snarling 140-pound rottweiler.

HELEN L. SPIEGEL, D.V.M.
Matawan, New Jersey

Attention K-Mort shoppers

To the editors:

Morton Kondracke ("K-Mort," Washington Diarist, March 22) has inspired me to reveal to the world (gratis) my idea for a life-enhancing invention. Are you annoyed by having to find a place to put those messy carbons after paying for dinner by credit card? Are you concerned about the freshness of your pesto-impaired breath? Then you are ready for an invention whose time has come: edible, mint-flavored carbon paper. Perhaps a toothpick-pen will not be far behind.

RICK LARRICK
Evanston, Illinois

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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FROM WASHINGTON

The vanishing

Remember when Bill Clinton was a failed president? Those were the days. There were about sixteen of them, by my count. Clinton took the oath on January 20. Two weeks later, after the crisis over gays in the military, after Zoe Baird and Kimba Wood, *The New York Times* Washington bureau chief R.W. Apple Jr. announced on the front page of his paper that Clinton's mistakes had been "politically devastating." Democrats were "shell-shocked." The "new president now desperately needs a victory."

How did Clinton try to turn things around? The first thing he did was to give a speech on welfare reform. Welfare may not provide a very good safety net for America's poor, but it provides a sturdy net for Clinton. Every time he seems on the verge of losing mainstream America (e.g., over the gay issue, or his "diversity" obsession) he renews his "commitment" to "end welfare as we know it," reminding voters why they thought he was a "new" kind of Democrat. During the campaign, Clinton's anti-welfare ads ("Those Who Are Able Must Go to Work") were among the first to run in most states, and they are widely believed to have been his most effective spots.

Actually, at the time of Clinton's early February speech, his "commitment" to welfare reform needed a bit of renewing. His health and human services secretary, Donna Shalala, tended to ignore the subject when listing her priorities. Not to worry, Clinton told the National Governors' Association: "Within the next ten days I will announce a welfare reform group." Clinton explicitly restated his call for a two-year time limit on welfare, after which recipients would have to "take a job"—a "public service" job if necessary. Clinton aide Bruce Reed told assembled reporters that "the budget which will be released in the next several weeks will begin to address how quickly we're going to spend" the money to implement the welfare changes.

Clinton's five-year budget has now, of course, been released, and the money for welfare reform . . . hey, wait a minute. *It's not there.* You can read through all 145 pages of "A Vision of Change," even the parts on "Rewarding Work," and you won't find a penny earmarked for "ending welfare as we know it."

What gives? Alice Rivlin, deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget, says the decision was to "treat welfare reform the way we are treating health care reform." In both areas, she notes, the administration's plans aren't yet "sufficiently defined" to enable precise cost estimates. So both reforms were taken out of the budget. Rivlin and other White House aides insist that this doesn't mean welfare reform won't happen. Clinton, they say, remains committed, just as he's committed to health care reform.

This argument would be more convincing if it weren't true that the welfare money *was* in the budget until a few days before Clinton presented it to Congress. Apparently the analogy between welfare reform and health care reform became more compelling when the OMB needed a few extra billion to meet its deficit targets. (Rivlin vigorously denies a rumor that she took the welfare money out on her own. Clinton "absolutely" signed off on it, she told me.) Clinton's welfare plans are no more vague than his national service plans, yet the budget has $6 billion for national service. "The president," Rivlin explains, "wanted [national service] to be on a faster track."

Why is welfare reform on a slower track? One reason, Clinton advisers say, is to avoid overloading the congressional committees (Senate Finance, House Ways & Means) that must also pass on Clinton's tax and health plans. In theory, these committees will first secure the nation's economic future, then spend a few months polishing off the health care problem and then, sometime toward the end of this year, eagerly set about resolving the dilemmas of poverty and welfare.

After the revolution, all things are possible! But dropping welfare reform from the five-year plan has created a large, practical obstacle. Under the "pay as you go" budget rules, any extra money spent reforming welfare will now have to be offset by additional tax increases or cuts in "entitlements." But after it has approved all the taxes and entitlement cuts in the Clinton economic plan and all the taxes and cuts in the Clinton health plan, will Congress (and Clinton) really be in the mood for a third round of pain to finance more spending on welfare mothers? In an election year? Even some Clinton advisers are skeptical.

Clinton's welfare "working group"—the one he promised on February 2 to announce "within the next ten days"—still hasn't been named. But its key members are likely to be three HHS sub-Cabinet officials: David Ellwood, Mary Jo Bane and Wendell Primus. All are genuine reformers, and Clinton properly credits Ellwood's book, *Poor Support*, with the idea of welfare time limits. But as Fred Barnes reported a few weeks ago (see "Carvilled," TNR, March 1), not even Ellwood is a reliable supporter of the Ellwood plan. In a recent paper, he worried that "desperately needy people will be cut off and hurt."

The amount of extra spending currently being contemplated by the Clintonites—$3 billion to $4 billion—may be small enough to sneak into the budget, but it is also almost certainly too small to finance any sweeping "two-years-and-take-a-job" reform. About 1.5 million welfare recipients would be eligible for "public service" jobs under such a two-year limit. If you figure it costs $2,500 to supervise each worker, and $1,500 for day care (both conservative estimates) you've already spent $6 billion, without paying for extra education and training, extra "earned income tax credits," humanitarian aid for people who are "cut off and hurt" or "transitional" child care for single mothers moving into the private sector.

In fact, Ellwood has already indicated that his preference is not for nationwide reform, but for varied experiments in "up to a dozen states." That's not a crazy idea—the states that want to reform are the most likely to make reforms work. But it also postpones the "end of welfare as we know it" until Clinton's second term. If there is one. A few state experiments will hardly fulfill the expectations raised by Clinton's campaign. In 1992, after all, there was a candidate who ran on a promise to let states conduct bold welfare experiments. His name was Bush.

In truth, voters have a right to expect that Clinton will do more than "end welfare as we know it." That phrase is a brilliant Clintonism, implying both radical change and traditional values, suggesting to conservatives that welfare will be "ended" without committing Clinton to anything in particular. At times, however, Clinton has used more precise language. In the weeks following the L.A. riots, he argued that welfare reform was one way to "break the culture of poverty," noting that in urban ghettos "most of the income comes from government checks and drug deals." In other words, he wanted to solve the problem of the welfare-dependent underclass. With his welfare reforms receding rapidly into the future, it's hard to see how he is going to do that.

MICKEY KAUS

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 19, 1993

THE IMMIGRANTS

Four days after the World Trade Center bombing, *The New York Times* received a letter claiming credit from a hitherto unknown group calling itself the Liberation Army Fifth Battalion. Federal investigators have authenticated the document as actually coming from the cohort of two Palestinians and three Egyptians now being held for the crime. One question that naturally comes to mind is whether the five men presently in detention are the entire Fifth Battalion. The letter's ultimatum suggests not: "Our army has more than 150 suicidal soldiers ready to go ahead" with "... missions against military and civilian targets in and out of the United States," including "nuclear targets."

Maybe this is just bravado, but the country has paid dearly for making this assumption in the past. When the Israeli religious chauvinist Meir Kahane was murdered in New York by El-Sayyid A. Nosair, almost everyone, including the FBI, was eager to see him as a lone assassin, a dark and unstable drifter like Sirhan Sirhan, the Palestinian immigrant who killed Robert F. Kennedy. We now know that Kahane's killing in 1990 was the first notable act of violence in the United States emanating from the crew of true-believer misfits under the sway of Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman. How the notorious clerical epicenter of a transoceanic terror network got a U.S. visa, and a permanent residence permit besides, is something yet to be explained.

There are many aggrieved peoples in the world, and millions of these aspire to become Americans. The early Arab migration was also of this sort. Mostly Christian but not all, it brought to these shores people fleeing famine and, as the Ottoman Empire tottered and finally collapsed, others fleeing perfervid faith and perfervid nationalisms. Like other newcomers, these Arab arrivals had bought themselves a psychological one-way ticket to America, putting the past behind them and making, more or less, a clean break with the old world. Another wave came in the late '60s and after, impelled to move by the evaporating myths of the Nasserist state and Arab socialism. Even if they nostalgically clung to one myth or another of Middle Eastern politics, they quickly made themselves and their children belong here.

But this cannot be said about many in the last large contingent of Arab immigrants, not a few of them illegals. They also were fleeing from the fires of their world. But the fires were ones that they had helped set. Unlike their predecessors, they carried the wars in their hearts with them. Now, a few of them have brought these wars to American streets. Surely, terror brings disgust and fear to the ordinary Arab immigrant. Yet one cannot deny that there is also an Arab culture in Brooklyn and Jersey City and Detroit off which the criminals feed and which gets a grim thrill from them.

Ours is not a country with which they identify or whose values they share. The American flag has been a flag of convenience for them, the flag of a patsy country that lets them in without scrutiny, lets them work, go to school, organize, harangue, hate and then, foolishly, tries to fit them into some fanciful mosaic of gorgeous diversity. It's hard to understand why they come here. Except that the places from which they come are, even in their own eyes, far, far worse. The family of Mahmud Abohalima, who calls himself the Emir of the Islamic Group in New York, clearly believes this. A German citizen born in Egypt, Abohalima disappeared right after the bombing. Actually he went back to his native village, where the Mukhabarat, or political police, who suspect everyone and watch everything, picked him up. Cairo didn't volunteer that it had him. That information came to the FBI from his brother, who, assuming the Egyptians were torturing him, decided he'd be better off in the country where he committed his crime than in Egypt. The Mubarak regime didn't own up to its prize possession until pressed by Washington. Still, they have given him up, doubtless with transcripts of his confessions.

Yes, the accused are innocent until proven guilty. But they and their legions of supporters are already guilty of violating the compact that allowed them through the Golden Door. The United States is entitled to expect loyalty from those who come to its shores. There are, after all, millions of deserving people whose wish to come to America has nothing to do with a wish that it be destroyed. The obligation of an immigrant, then, to want to live as an American in a way goes deeper than refraining from any particular criminal act. And it is an obligation that should weigh heavily in the judgment of consular officials and the immigration service as they encounter applicants for entry. Those whose records show them to believe terror is rightly the arbiter of politics should not be eligible. It is part of the responsibility of states to protect their citizens from harm. And terrorism is a form of harm from which, sadly, we are no longer immune. •

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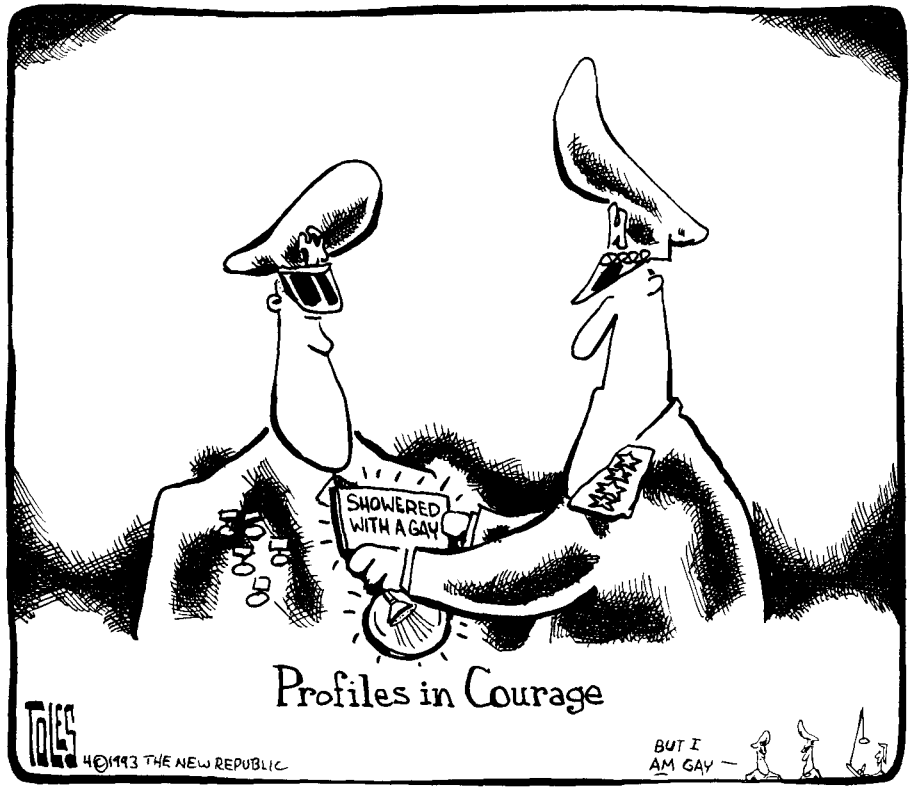
NOTEBOOK

CLINTONISM WATCH: "No, I didn't misspeak myself. Nothing I said yesterday is in any way inconsistent with anything I've ever said before about this." —March 25, on CBS's "48 Hours," in reference to his previous comment that he might consider segregating gays in the military

AUCTION NEAR: The president's promise not to let the special interests pick apart his economic plan lasted until March 30. Under pressure from Western senators, he agreed to drop provisions from his plan that would phase in higher government fees for mining, grazing and timber production on public land. Clinton, being Clinton, said he would still try to raise the fees by unspecified "administrative measures," some other time. The amount at stake in this particular conflict is only $1 billion over five years, but the administration's cave-in sends a clear signal to everyone else whose base is being closed, whose benefit is being cut or whose tax is being raised: "sacrifice," henceforth, will be shared only by those too weak politically to fend it off. The bidding war has begun.



PANAMA RAT: Fatuous political outbursts are de rigueur at the Oscars, but one this year took the prize. It was Barbara Trent's acceptance of the best documentary award for her film *Panama Deception*. Trent proclaimed that the U.S. media had been co-conspirators in the 1989 Panamanian invasion, since they prevented the "real" story of the invasion from getting out. And what is the real story? According to the film, the invasion was a pretext to test new weapons and an excuse to tear up the treaty that returns the Panama Canal to Panama. This Christic Institute-style paranoia was so far-out that even PBS, which broadcast the also-nominated and even more discredited "Liberators," refused to air it.

THE DUMP: As the federal government's landlord, the General Services Administration has long been Washington's favorite political dumping ground—where friends of, and fund-raisers for, George Bush, Rich Bond, Bob Michel and Phil Gramm have all managed to get high-paying sweetheart jobs, screw-up government contracts and return to the private sector through the revolving door. With an annual budget of $10 billion, it's an expensive one too. In its twenty-three years of existence, the GSA has gone through seventeen administrators (its top-ranking post) and is regularly criticized for its wasteful inefficacy. Now, Bill Clinton has named the newest top dog of the agency: Roger Johnson, an Orange County businessman who, like his predecessors, is a wealthy campaign contributor with no government experience. And like GSA hacks of the past twelve years, he is a Republican.

P.C. NIMBY: When former dashiki-wearer and Berkeley radical Ronald V. Dellums ascended to the chair of the House Armed Services Committee, many in the defense world cringed at the thought of this longtime crusader for massive defense cuts in charge of the Pentagon's purse strings. They quivered when, at his first news conference after becoming chairman, Dellums said, "I came here as an advocate of peace and continue to do so," and promised deep cuts in the defense budget. Well, the defense lobbyists don't have much to worry about after all. Dellums has moaned louder than almost anyone in Congress about base closings, particularly of the Alameda Naval Air Station and four other small bases in his district. In other words, give peace a chance, but not in my backyard.

OH, WELL, THAT'S O.K. THEN: LAPD Sergeant Stacey Koon testified that, by beating Rodney King, the police may have saved his life. If they hadn't beat him, Koon argued, they might have had to put him in a chokehold or shoot him. •

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BLUE CROSS, MR. DALI?

The Surreal World of Health Care Reform

HEALTH CARE REFORM	SURREALISM
Thousands of indecisive bureaucrats moving about with no apparent pattern	Thousands of bureaucrats in bowler hats floating over the landscape
time quickly running out before system financially implodes	*melting clocks*
Hillary, a guiding force of inspiration	Gala Dali, guiding force of inspiration
redefining entitlement	*redefining the subconscious*
Washington, D.C., 1993	Paris, 1924
play-or-pay	*play play play*
seeks to create new forms primarily by reason, but also by unthinking impulse and blind reason—or even by accident	seeks to create new forms not primarily by reason but by unthinking impulse and blind reason—or even by accident
frenzied lobbying	*perspective distortion*
unseemly squabbling	manifestos
Canadian system looked at as possible model	*models wearing Canadian bacon*
red tape	red telephone shaped like a lobster
Oregon-style Medicaid rationing	*Dali-style non-emphasis on being rational*
new push toward preventative care and prophylaxis	two lovers kissing with blanket wrapped over their heads
tobacco tax	*ceci n'est pas une pipe*
costly and unnecessary procedures	frivolity
The Jackson Hole Group: meets to discuss their belief in managed competition	Un Chien Andalou: manages to completely put holes in notions of belief
Outraged and confused pharmaceutical and insurance companies	Outraged and confused art establishment
Congress	*Sotheby's*
Garamendi Plan introduced: stresses public management over private competition	Monty Python's introduction: stresses amusing cartoon snippets over top of privates
universal access to health care	*a blue dog walks backward, picks up a telephone and sings an operetta*

DOUGLAS COUPLAND

MOSCOW POSTCARD

UNEASY RIDER

By Liesl Schillinger

Last month in Moscow, a dollar was worth 650 rubles, and 650 rubles to a Russian was ... incalculable. To the mafiosi, the black marketeers, the elite and the reckless, it was worth a fourth of the entrance price to Moscow's ultra-trendy, punk Sexton Fozd Club, or a Snickers bar and a pack of American cigarettes at one of the bright yellow roadside kiosks that taunt the rest of the populace with products they can't afford. But to most Russians, 650 rubles was a week's worth of bread, cabbage, salt pork and apples—so it was better, as a foreigner, not to flaunt the five-dollar bill jammed into your pocket along with the pale rainbow of thousand- and five-hundred ruble notes as you fumbled to buy a *pirozhok* at a roadside stand. If you accidentally did show your dollars, you might find yourself approached by college students, or kiosk merchants, or your landlady. "*Kuplyu dollari* ..."—I buy dollars, they would say—not threatening, but hoping, and with clear logic. By this week the dollar had risen to 750 rubles, netting any speculator who had bought five American dollars a 500-ruble profit.

An American or other foreigner standing on a Moscow subway stairway is unlikely to be mugged. He is more likely to be offered a pedigreed Basset pup for sale—$50 U.S.—or asked if he would like to share an apartment with an elderly lady in a prime block for only $100 a month. It is also altogether likely that a stranger might approach him and invite him to a party, where his hosts will take their odd potatoes and flour and come up with dumplings, ply him with vodka and champagne, sing folk songs until the wee hours of the morning, ask after distant relatives in Phoenix and refuse any gifts in return. In Russia poverty is no curb to curiosity, and no excuse for poor hospitality.

This does not mean that there is not a scramble for life's more material satisfactions when they arise. Everyone knows there is a McDonald's near Red Square where Russians can buy lunch for the equivalent of a week's pay and receive full service—one pretty girl in McDonaldland attire opens the door, smiles and says "Welcome!"; another takes your order in Russian or English; others industriously mop up the never-ending buildup of grit and melted snow; and a final girl lets you out and wishes you "all the best, and see you soon!"—but there is also a Pizza Hut, Benetton and Christian Dior. It is chic today in Moscow to buy your

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groceries at the Irish House, a hard-currency grocery store that is as clean, well lit and well stocked as any Safeway, with gourmet cheeses, fresh meat, Spanish olives and peanut butter, yogurt, fresh asparagus and exotic starfruit, Nabisco cookies, frozen pasta, pâtés from Denmark, toothpaste from America. You can buy a fresh loaf of bread, sliced and wrapped, for $2 there, or you can get the same loaf at a Russian *Bulochnaya* for thirty-one rubles—around a nickel. Yet those Muscovites who are able will pay the exponentially higher price so they can emerge with a hard-currency trophy in a green and white bag, an icon of capitalism.

In further imitation of the West, there are more than a dozen gambling casinos of recent vintage in Moscow, in any one of which, one Moscow magazine estimates, Westerners drop "between $25,000-$30,000 every night," and where rich black-marketeers from the Caucasus throw out $100 bills as if they were Monopoly money. There are even ruble casinos for the working man, and in the bleak, understocked *gastronom* shops where Muscovites buy groceries you will find Harrah's slot machines lined up against a wall, being played by people with the same glazed countenances of gamblers in Atlantic City or Monaco.

There is no question that Western goods have brought Western evils; the new availability of foreign products and foreign money here has generated a new breed of criminals. But the *gangstery*—as Russians refer to them in tones of condemnation mingled with respect—are neither as ubiquitous nor as professional as sensationalist Western reports imply. Guns are few and are mainly used by mafiosi against each other. All the same, the bouncers at the Sexton Fozd Club frisk you when you walk in and search your bags, just to be on the safe side. Wherever money and liquor flow freely, tempers, and dangers, run high, and the chance that someone will be armed increases. Russian drinkers generally are feisty in temperament but not homicidal; the chief weapon in Russia is still fists, and women are almost never involved.

In general, respect for women has survived whole from the previous century. A standard compliment from a Russian man might be, *"Vy tak zhenstvenny"* (You are so womanly)—uttered in tones of awe. And any woman walking on an icy path will likely be waylaid by a concerned male pedestrian, who will firmly grip her arm, navigate her around slippery patches of ice and escort her to her destination, regardless of her protests.

Women who go out alone at night receive a slightly different reaction. My friend Irina, who is a classic Russian beauty with gray-blue Slavic eyes, full lips and broad cheekbones, is foolishly fearless. "I'm not afraid of anything or anyone," she says. "Someone gave me a gas gun once, but I lost it. Why be afraid? Just to live is dangerous—because it means you will die. You must take risks. I love traveling, I love the world, I love new places, I love people. I love to live, *chestno*, with integrity." Because of her philosophy, Irina sometimes finds herself in situations most Russian women never face. She has a German boyfriend, Gunnar, which in itself is a risky proposition in Russia, where the memory of the Second World War has not faded, and where simply speaking German is an insult in some circles. "Some say '*ya prodalas*'—that I sold myself," she says. "But they have their own sins and try to blame me for them. My mother says, if you love, you love. *Normalno.* It's normal." Gunnar speaks no Russian, and as Irina speaks no German, they communicate with each other in English, a language in which they have perhaps eighty words in common. "We understand each other perfectly," Irina says. One night in March, the intrepid Irina dragged Gunnar and me into the worst underworld encounter I have heard of so far.

It was approaching two in the morning, and Irina hailed a gypsy cab for the three of us. The drivers were Armenian—many of the neophyte black-marketeers come from Armenia, Georgia and elsewhere in the Caucasus—and they looked rakish as well as drunk, so I murmured to Irina as she stood in the dark snowy road, leaning into the decrepit Lada to bargain with the driver, that we should perhaps wait for another car. But Irina was in high spirits and insisted we get in. No sooner had the doors slammed shut than we found ourselves in the thrall of sentimental Armenian *bandity*. The Armenians drove us around town for hours, across sand-strewn icy highways cluttered with American and German billboards, past dump trucks loaded with snow and through the birch woods of Izmailovsky Park. "Ira, Ira, I love you," they wailed over and over. "I don't know what it is, but I always have this effect on men from the Caucasus," Irina whispered to me.

"Ira, how is it you are with this German?" one of the men protested, referring to Gunnar, whom she had told them was her husband. "I will kill him and you will marry me, and we will have many children," the Armenian said. Irina laughed deeply; at three in the morning on a cold day in Moscow, after a night of vodka, champagne and celebrating, nothing seemed too serious to her. "As you like," she said. One of them pulled out a gun, and Irina laughed. "You are one crazy woman," our hijackers marveled, and put away the gun. "*Nu*, before we kill him, let us celebrate Women's Day," they said, referring to the March 8 Socialist holiday that is Valentine's Day, anniversary, birthday and Mother's Day rolled into one.

They stopped at a roadside kiosk and bought champagne and chocolate, and together we drank and toasted womankind as the car weaved and slid on the treacherous streets. "Sing," they shouted, and we all sang. At about five, they reluctantly dropped us off at the drab Pervomaiskaya Street apartment block where Gunnar and Irina live. "All right, now we will shoot your husband," they told Irina, and brought out the gun. "First, try to kill me," Irina taunted them. At that, the Armenian kidnappers got scared. They were frightened, Irina said, "that we might be bigger mafia than them, because I wasn't afraid." "Get out," they said, and

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didn't charge us for the cab ride. Later, Irina was disgusted by the whole episode, not because of its danger, but because of the lack of chivalry it showed. "I have never known such people," she said angrily. "They are not men, not proper Russian men if they stoop so low as to threaten girls."

One shudders to think of the end of such a journey in New York or London, or any other city. But Moscow is not any other city, just as Russia is not any other country. Mostly, Russia today is not as much dangerous as it is unpredictable. "We are *vaildvest* now," Russians say, rather boastfully, and shake their heads. *Vaildvest* is Russian for "Wild West."

LIESL SCHILLINGER is a free-lance writer who lives in New York.

Gays in the military, 1951.

BUNK MATES

By Martin Litvin

In 1951 I was a soldier in the U.S. Army in Great Britain. Although 23 and a college graduate, I was abysmally ill-informed about human behavior; so when I reached the former Royal Air Force Airdrome Brize Norton, in Oxfordshire, I was quite unprepared for what I eventually learned.

I was assigned as a legal clerk with a company of engineers. A cot and footlocker were duly provided me in a newly built hut occupied by perhaps twenty other men. I met several individuals near my own age, including a couple who were secretly gay. I was the only draftee in the place, a kind of a twerp, really, but I lived among some excellent soldiers, certainly some far better than I.

American military engineers were in Britain at the time to fortify English bases against the Soviets. Before the outfit reached England, however, it had refurbished a small Canadian base in the Arctic wilds, Goose Bay, Labrador. That place was quite inhospitable, adjacent to a body of water whence came continual cold winds, snowstorms and ice showers. The only nice season began in June and ended in August and featured an abundance of huge mosquitoes. All else was icy, blustery and grim. There was little in the way of civilization, and a few thousand red-blooded American men found to their unspeakable anguish an almost total absence of females, save for a few tubercular Eskimo women, most of them married.

Zealously, the men performed grievously tough labor amid indescribable conditions for months on end, and their only companionship was with one another. The officers muttered and complained about their own sex-starved lives but bravely coped with social needs by laying on a vigorous sports program: plenty of baseball, football, basketball and pingpong. In the evenings, however, discreet dances were organized; men paired off, and those wanting it found love, got themselves secretly married without recourse to law, had special trysting places, even arranged for a barracks or two all their own. These encounters were described to me by several of the "veterans" of Goose Bay. The men confided their memories in low voices. I kept quiet and listened.

Were these hairy, tough-talking engineers really dancing together, holding hands and . . . doing it? When people are put into tough situations, they manage. When I joined the outfit in early August 1951, the men had been in England perhaps nine or ten months. Some formed romantic liaisons with English women, got married and started families. Several of them brought their wives and kids from the States. Many others ran around on weekends seeking women. They looked in London, where, after nightfall, there were numbers in Piccadilly, Bond Street and the little crooked avenues around the Windmill Theatre in Soho—and other locales certainly had whores too.

But there were also many enlisted men who did nothing socially. Among them were Goose Bay engineers whose companions ditched them when they reached England and returned to women. The discarded soldiers found the readjustment virtually impossible. They had a hideous time stifling the feelings that, in Labrador, had been openly expressed. Those men who sat in an NCO club or village pub drinking, night after night, were disconsolate beyond measure. Yet they soldiered and never made trouble.

My daily employment consisted of routine clerical duties in the base's Army judge advocate's office. At my desk, I observed ordinary paperwork as it came in and went out and I saw the charge sheets on men from various duty stations. Never once did I see a charge sheet against an American soldier for seeking sexual favors from another American soldier. Off base, a few times, some men became involved with English men, but infrequently. The most hated problem was stealing, not homosexuality. Men who were caught stealing paid an awful price at the hands of their fellows. In our outfit, no one ever took so much as a paper clip from another man.

As for any harsh talk about someone's sexual interests, I never heard a word. One Sunday morning I saw a sergeant in bed with another sergeant, across the aisle from me, only a few feet distant. The two young men were making love without the least regard to the surroundings. They had been a couple in Labrador. One man, a heavy drinker, married, with dependents living on base, had come stumbling into our hut around midnight, having been turned out of the house by his wife. He got in bed with his former companion and remained with him until perhaps 8 a.m. Finished with his lovemaking, he got up, took his clothes out to the

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communal shower, bathed, dressed and went home. Maybe twenty others also witnessed the scene, yet not a single word was mentioned about the incident. Instead, everyone felt sympathy for the young NCO who had been pining for months and finally experienced a few minutes of the old love. Generally, we lived in relative harmony. I never saw a fight or physical abuse of any kind. People spoke to one another in a peaceable way.

Yes, there were gay men, a few, but they pursued their interests off the base and discreetly. Otherwise, I recollect three Air Force enlisted men who wanted to get out of disliked six-year hitches. They turned themselves in as homosexuals and were promptly sent home for discharge. That was the extent of it.

The salient memory that remains after all this time is that the military higher-ups were and remain a bunch of shameful, lousy hypocrites. Even now, you can read about or see on television Army officers or Navy admirals who cavil about lifting the ban on gays, saying that the presence of a gay man in an enlisted barracks would scare the others out of their wits, cause them to jump up on their bunks, howl and shiver with fear. Such rubbish. The result is an ugly masquerade, dishonest and disheartening. Most folks—soldiers included—perform better when they can tell the truth.

MARTIN LITVIN is the author most recently of *I'm Going to Be Somebody*, a biography of the humorist George Fitch (Western Books).

Lost wonder-drugs of the rainforest.

JUNGLE FEVER

By Sam Thernstrom

Environmentalists should be quietly, cautiously celebrating pharmaceutical companies. The drug industry, in its search for breakthroughs in medication, has come to see that conservation of natural resources, and especially of tropical rainforests, is very much in its own interest. The notion that mysterious tropical plants and animals might yield new cures may have at one time seemed farfetched. But recent work in tropical biology has established that the vast majority of species on Earth await discovery. Scientists have identified some 1.4 million species of organisms so far. Only within the last decade, as tropical deforestation rates have soared, have biologists begun to see what they're missing. Some estimate that there are as many as 50 million species. And while that figure may be high, even conservative estimates place the minimum number at 5 million, and an upper range of 30 million is not implausible.

These facts alone may not impress: Why should anyone care about the millions of unknown insects crawling about unknown trees in tropical forests? We find it hard to appreciate a resource that cannot be cut down, dug up, pumped out or eaten, and even harder to speculate on the value of unknown flowers and beetles. "Biodiversity," says Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson, "is our most valuable but least appreciated resource." He could have added "least developed." For as the forests are destroyed, these millions of unknown species are likely being destroyed along with them.

Setting aside, for the moment, the myriad moral and ethical questions that such mass destruction raises, there are also practical concerns: in destroying undiscovered species, we lose unique information. There's no way to know just how useful that information could be. But it is virtually certain that out of the many millions of species, there are bound to be at least a few plants that will never be discovered.

Jalisco maize almost met with this fate. When this species of corn was discovered in Mexico by a graduate student in the 1970s, its entire population was confined to just twenty-five acres of mountainside. And this would have been destroyed within a week, since the land was slated to be cleared for farming. Jalisco maize has the potential to become a multibillion-dollar crop: it is resistant to many diseases and, unlike other existing corn species, it is a perennial.

And while the agricultural potential of yet unknown species is surely significant, the greatest practical value of our unknown biodiversity may be medicinal. In the United States one-quarter of all prescriptions are filled with drugs made from plant extracts; aspirin is derived from an unheralded plant, meadowsweet. Another 13 percent of our drugs are derived from microorganisms, and 3 percent from animals; in all, 41 percent of our medicines are derived from living things.

Despite the success drug companies have had with plant-based drugs, in the last several decades pharmaceutical research has focused heavily on man-made compounds. Analyzing plants is time consuming and expensive, and most plants turn out to be useless as medicine. As a result, fewer than 3 percent of the world's known flowering plants have even been screened for medicinally useful compounds. But recently the focus has begun to shift back to the biological world. As Charles McChesney of the University of Mississippi explains, "The synthetic chemists have made the easy molecules"; new plants now seem worth investigating. It's also easier to do so since recent technological advancements have made it possible to screen huge numbers of compounds quickly.

Recent discoveries of plants with lucrative medicinal value have helped to rekindle the interest of the drug industry. One of the greatest modern advances in cancer treatment, for example, was nothing more than a remarkable accident: while examining the rosy periwinkle of Madagascar for anti-diuretic qualities during the mid-1980s, chemists found two powerful alkaloids, vinblastine and vincristine, which proved to be the most

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Is This the End of Merit Pay?

A decade ago, there were headlines all across the country about merit pay for teachers. The president of the United States and the secretary of education were pushing for the idea. So were governors and legislatures and school boards, and a number of merit pay plans were put through. We haven't heard about merit pay for a long time until last week when the Fairfax County, Virginia, school board voted to terminate its merit pay plan. There are some lessons to be learned from the Fairfax story.

When the Fairfax superintendent and school board proposed a merit pay plan several years ago, teachers opposed it for some pretty good reasons. They wondered how fair the evaluations were likely to be—wouldn't the system encourage cronyism and give administrators a chance to reward their favorites? Wouldn't the scheme pit teachers against each other, instead of encouraging cooperation and teamwork? However, despite these reservations, most Fairfax teachers eventually accepted the plan.

What happened? Many teachers signed up for the tough series of evaluations, and they started doing what they needed to in order to qualify for merit pay. The plan was working the way it was designed to. But before it was fully underway, the school board ran into financial problems and started reneging on its promises.

When a budget squeeze comes and people have to figure out what to get rid of, merit pay turns out to be a prime candidate for the ax.

Merit pay awards were originally supposed to be 10 percent salary increases, which would be added to base pay and counted toward retirement. When it came time to award the first merit increases, the board unilaterally reduced the promised 10 percent to 9 percent and, instead of a pensionable salary increase, turned the award into a nonpensionable bonus.

Last year, faced with a budget shortfall, the school board suspended merit pay. This year, the board decided that merit pay was simply too expensive and threw it out altogether. The result is a lot of disappointed and demoralized teachers who took the scheme seriously and did their part. Now that the school district is short of money, they find that merit pay is one of the first things to be sacrificed.

This isn't an isolated story. In Texas, where the state legislature passed a merit pay law in 1984, teachers were told they'd be evaluated, and those who got a certain score would be awarded merit pay. The legislators must have underestimated the merit of their teachers because they were horrified when 100,000 teachers qualified. So they changed the rules—retroactively—and reduced the list by nearly a third. The teachers who were knocked off it had to try again under the new rules.

I have always had reservations about merit pay for teachers. If you want to improve school performance, you should encourage people in a school to work together, not compete with each other, and you can do this by rewarding the teachers in an entire school for its success. But the Fairfax and Texas stories illustrate another big problem with merit pay. The people who vote for it are committed to it only until it starts costing money.

When merit pay is first proposed, supporters don't know how many teachers will qualify. What they do know is that many taxpayers consider it a tough, fair strategy for improving education. In other words, merit pay looks like a cheap way of satisfying the public and making headlines. But when teachers start qualifying and merit pay gets expensive, you don't hear parents or other taxpayers applauding any more. And when a budget squeeze comes and people have to figure out what to get rid of, merit pay turns out to be a prime candidate for the ax.

Basically, what you get from merit pay is a lot of serious morale problems. Some teachers are opposed to it from start to finish. Others are afraid when merit pay is first put in, and many are resentful because they feel they deserve merit pay and don't get it. Then, there is a buildup to great satisfaction as many teachers work hard to get merit pay and either succeed or believe that they will in the near future. When merit pay becomes too expensive and it is either killed or the program is gutted, you get a second wave of resentment—this time because something that was promised, and that people have been working hard to get, has been taken away.

What about the big claims we heard when merit pay first came in? If any of them had come to pass, you can be sure we'd be hearing about it from Texas or Florida or Lamar Alexander's Tennessee. Since nobody is telling stories about all the wonderful things merit pay has accomplished, it's safe to assume that merit pay is another one of these educational experiments that was doomed to succeed and is now quietly dying.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1993 by Albert Shanker.

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effective cures we know for two particularly deadly cancers, Hodgkin's disease and acute lymphocytic leukemia. Survival rates are up from 2 percent to 58 percent and from 20 percent to 80 percent respectively, and sales of these two drugs now total $180 million a year.

Both pharmaceutical companies and conservationists took note of the rosy periwinkle. Conservationists were delighted at the discovery, since it offered dramatic proof of a popular theme: biodiversity is worth saving. But that didn't mean it was going to be saved: none of the profits from the periwinkle went to conserving the forests in which it was found. This was particularly distressing since that same habitat may well have contained other plants or insects of equal or greater value. Conservation biologists realized they could not afford to repeat that mistake. The result was a ground-breaking partnership between Merck & Co., the largest pharmaceutical company in the United States, and Costa Rica's National Institute for Biodiversity, INBio. Their agreement, signed in September 1991, is widely regarded as the next great hope for financing conservation in the tropics. A *New York Times* editorial last year hailed the Merck-INBio partnership as one that "shows the way" for progress on biotechnology issues, issues that the United Sates had been unable to resolve with other countries at the Earth Summit.

Under the terms of the agreement, Merck provides INBio with $1 million, plus $180,000 worth of research equipment, which INBio has used to support a team of thirty-one "parataxonomists" who comb Costa Rica's forests searching for new plant and animal species. The team members are native Costa Ricans, trained in species identification and collection. And they've been remarkably successful. Each parataxonomist brings in up to 5,000 insects and fifty plant specimens each month. Costa Rica may harbor 500,000 species, many of which are only found in very limited habitats. Arthropods (insects, spiders) alone may account for 300,000 species, of which only one-fifth have been described.

In return for its support, INBio gives Merck plant and insect samples, which it screens for valuable compounds. From a pharmaceutical point of view, the beauty of the tropics is not only that they contain a phenomenal number of species, but that the species density is so high and the evolutionary struggle so richly developed that many of the plants and insects have evolved sophisticated chemical defenses. These defenses—which are often very potent—are also often medically valuable. Alkaloids such as morphine and nicotine are commonly found in the tropics, as are other medicinally useful compounds such as phenolics, tannins (found in cecropias and mangroves, both of which are abundant in the tropics), cyanogenic glycosides (found in passionflowers and manioca) and terpenoids, which are found in more than thirty species of Costa Rican dry forest plants. So the potential for success is high.

The Merck-INBio partnership is more than just another example of industry realizing there's money to be made in conservation. It represents a growing trend in conservation biology toward placing conservation in a larger social context. Should Merck successfully market new drugs derived from the INBio plant samples, a large portion of the profits will return to protect the habitat.

It's this last step that, naturally, conservationists are most enthusiastic about. Yet it may also prove to be the most problematic. "Chemical prospecting" is a slow and expensive process, as is bringing a new drug to market. And though tropical deforestation rates have dropped significantly in some countries, overall they remain very high. Unless something is done to stop it, the researchers may be too late.

SAM THERNSTROM is a research fellow at the Political Economy Research Center, an environmental think tank.

Why family leave won't work.

CRASS ACT

By James V. DeLong

Only Scrooge, it seems, could oppose the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. What company would deny a worker a furlough to take a child to physical therapy, or nurse a sick spouse? Because of this instinctive reaction, there was little real debate about passage of the act, which requires large employers to grant up to twelve weeks per year of unpaid leave to permanent employees for the birth or adoption of a child, a serious health condition or to care for a spouse, child or parent with a serious condition. Under the law, the returning employee must be restored to his or her old position or an equivalent.

At first the leave requirement appears to make only a minor demand of businesses. But it begins to look rather different when one examines the fine print. To start with, coverage is not exactly limited to "big business." Anyone employing fifty people within a radius of seventy-five miles is covered, bringing in many offices, stores and other smaller enterprises. And the coverage extends not only to full-time workers but to anyone employed for 1,250 hours (about three-fifths time) over the past year.

"Serious health condition" is also an expansive term, covering any physical or mental condition or impairment that involves continuing treatment by a health care provider. Connoisseurs of legal shadings will note that "involves" does not mean "requires," and that "impairment" means that a condition need not be temporary or remediable. And the term "health care provider" includes not just licensed doctors, but any person whom the secretary of labor decides is capable

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of providing health care services. The employer does have the right to require that the existence of a serious health condition be certified by the employee's doctor. Employers can also get a second opinion from a doctor of their own choice, and, if the two opinions differ, get a binding decision from a jointly chosen third provider. But the employer pays for all extra opinions.

The leave is unpaid, but the employer must maintain the employee's health insurance. With the annual per-employee cost of health coverage for fee-for-service plans at a big company costing as much as $6,000, and the annual U.S. average about $4,000, this means real money. As a benchmark, the average wage in the United States is about $18,000 per year. A three-month leave might cost as much as $1,500 in insurance benefits. This adds 8.3 percent of the annual wage to the cost per worker who takes the leave. The statute also seems to require that the employer pay the worker's share of the health insurance premium during the leave as well, which could make it even more expensive.

Medically related leave need not be taken in a single lump. The employee is entitled to take intermittent leave or to work on a reduced schedule if this is certified as medically necessary by the health care provider. If a family member is involved, medical necessity includes anything that will "assist" recovery. Such a worker can be transferred, but only temporarily, to a job with equivalent pay that is better suited to the new schedule. Leave for birth or adoption can be taken not just at the time of the event but any time within twelve months thereafter. Thirty days' notice of intent to take leave is required, unless this is not possible, in which case it is up to the health care provider. The result is that any employee with a tame health care provider can transform himself into a three-quarter-time worker.

The employer may deny these job restriction rights to the top-paid 10 percent of employees, but only if necessary to prevent "substantial and grievous economic injury," which suggests litigation. An aggrieved worker can sue for up to double damages plus attorney's fees. The Department of Labor can also sue, and since it has enforcement and rule-making authority, the realistic consequence is that ambiguities will be resolved in favor of the worker. For example, if a retail outlet manager returning from leave is offered a job fifty miles away, is he being offered an equivalent position? If Commerce decides, yes; if Labor decides, unlikely.

Finally, the law says that if an employee fails to return from leave, the employer may recoup the health insurance premiums it paid. This supposedly protects employers, but in fact it represents little more than wishful thinking. The right of repayment is erased if the worker doesn't return because of a serious health condition or because of other circumstances beyond his control. Again, certification from a doctor can be required, but on this point there is no provision for review of the first doctor's opinion. So any worker who

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leaves a job within a year of the birth of a child, or for any health-related reason, can get three extra months of health insurance coverage quite easily. Further, the "other circumstances" are undefined and need not relate to the reasons for the leave. To ensure that employers never recover any premium money, Congress also forgot to include any enforcement section for this provision.

All this creates a program rather different from the p.r. version, one that, to a manager, has the potential to be a major nuisance. Supporters argue that it is more efficient for a company to grant leave than to lose a good employee, and that a program to accommodate family emergencies is sensible company policy. True enough, but there is an abyss between a good general policy and the spider web of mandates imposed by the law, and between voluntary policies tempered by managerial discretion and mandated rights enforced by courts and bureaucracies. Benefits designed to accommodate emergencies can quickly evolve into routine entitlements, as the history of sick leave illustrates.

Given these pressures, the potential for bias against hiring the protected group—in this case those likely to require leave—is considerable. The Family and Medical Leave Act is another step toward creating a schism in the work force between an in-group with decent pay and benefits, and an out-group lacking all of these, and composed disproportionately of women whose family responsibilities require them to move in and out of employment, work part-time and, in general, be flexible in their work arrangements. Some will make the inner circle of employment by large companies and will enjoy good health insurance, family leave protection, job security and other benefits. But this circle will become smaller, because the policies ostensibly designed to help these people will deter managers from hiring them and will contribute to a growing reliance on part-time and contingent workers rather than staff.

Increasingly, managers are beginning to think having employees is a bad idea and that the sensible thing is to have as few as possible. Companies are substituting machines for labor at an increased rate. They are also shifting a growing number of functions—janitorial services, accounting, travel, subassembly—to outside contractors. A large but unmeasured proportion of the current downsizing of large companies is due to this shift.

From a theoretical point of view, contracting out for services shouldn't diminish pay or benefits, because it shifts employment obligations to the contractor. The real world is not so pure. Outside contractors seldom offer as good a benefits package as a large company would because their fields are so competitive. Furthermore, the contractor's most important expertise may not be in the substantive area for which it is hired but in patching together and supervising a labor force of part-time and temporary employees, and in structuring jobs so that absences and leaves create minimal disruption.

Why was all of this so little discussed before the bill passed? A recent spate of stories arguing that the act really does not do much and only codifies fair dealing is not reassuring because none analyzes or even mentions the details of the actual program. When you do, it looks like Scrooge might have a point.

JAMES V. DELONG is a Washington, D.C., attorney.

How Somalian relief went wrong.

LEMON AID

By Marguerite Michaels

With Somalia now flooded with food, the successful humanitarian aid operation is taking on the character of a not very humanitarian occupation. The U.S. military is suffering from both mission creep and mission confusion. To disarm or not to disarm? Whom to disarm? How to disarm? The answers to these questions change on a day-to-day basis. The result: harbors and airports are safe, but the streets that lead to them are not. Having no clear policy, the military is distracting itself with a mission spinoff called "nation-building"—forming committees of elders, "assisting" police forces (the training of police by the U.S. military is currently illegal), setting prison sentences for petty crimes, facilitating import contracts and reworking village traffic patterns.

The number of international aid organizations come to save Somalia continues to increase. The humanitarians race around planting agency-logo flags on cars, office buildings, feeding centers and camps for the displaced. Relief agencies like to be called "non-governmental organizations." But this is usually a misnomer, since most NGOs are aligned with particular countries and receive up to 60 percent of their budgets from those countries' governments. The Canadian soldiers, finding that Médecins Sans Frontières had been locked out of a Mogadishu hospital for not paying ridiculously high wages to the Somali staff, promptly took over the site for Samaritan's Purse of Calgary. The Unified Task Force specifically did not assign Italian soldiers anywhere near Italy's former colonial plantations, but Italy is sending three NGOs into the region, which is already full of other countries' NGOs.

The resulting neocolonial competition produces wasteful repetition. There is now so much free food around that farmers are reconsidering farming as a viable way of life. The relief agencies' armed guards are at the heart of the military's disarmament problem. Upon arrival, the military found that the aid workers had hired armies of their own in order to deliver food.

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Aid staffers insist these people still need to be armed to protect against bandits. The military says too many of them are the bandits.

Nobody is in charge. The United Nations, moving too slowly, is looking with increasing trepidation at the unorganized mess that is about to be handed over to it. With many of the crucial civilian supervisory posts too long vacant—"it's hard to get good people to come to Africa," the U.N. says—the chances of a successful United Nations Operation in Somalia have decreased dramatically.

What went wrong? To begin with, the famine was over before the Marines landed. "Famines have a curve," says Willet Weeks of Save the Children (USA). "The famine in Somalia peaked a year ago February." By November CARE had suspended free food distribution in Mogadishu. From October to December the death rate in Bardera, one of the hardest hit villages, had been brought down from 300 a day to fifty. Food was getting through.

But at a price the aid agencies' government donors could no longer afford. It cost as much as $200,000 in "fees" and "taxes" to offload a ship of food aid. To distribute it, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Swiss agency that had delivered most of the food in Somalia since Siad Barre's fall in January 1991, hired hundreds of Somali guards in Kismayo alone, at a cost of up to $110 per month plus free food per guard. Looting continued anyway—sometimes by the Red Cross's own guards—and ranged anywhere from 40 percent to 100 percent. CARE staffers euphemistically called raids on their "guarded" warehouses in Mogadishu "spontaneous distribution." To avoid such events CARE had started steering its food directly to the warlords' warehouses. They figured 50 percent was distributed to people who actually needed it and 50 percent was diverted. Guards were also necessary to protect relief workers. "We received death threats all the time," says a Red Cross staffer.

Relief agencies increasingly became factions in the civil war. "They got sucked into the clan wars in a big way," says a Canadian military officer. "The relief aid agencies are part of the problem here, beginning with the self-induced rates of extortion they were paying and ending with the fact that, let's say through inexperience, they worked with one clan and not another. They chose sides. They did indeed have enemies."

Name a relief agency and the Somalis will tell you which clan has it "hostage." Gossip about the NGOs is rampant. They laugh about how a Somali fired by one agency simply switches to another, no questions asked. And they see the same with the international staff—especially in the U.N. They talk about the "Swiss children" the Red Cross sent who knew more about spoiling Somali girls than how to set up neutral feeding centers.

Aid agency staffers who have worked for several years in several countries admit that "all the rules were broken in Somalia." You never do untargeted food distributions, they say; if high-value goods such as protein biscuits and cooking oil are stolen and show up in the market, you leave; if colleagues are threatened, you leave. Says one relief aid veteran: "The message from headquarters was 'do whatever is necessary in Somalia to get us established; we have to feed these people.' The signal we sent to the Somalis, however, was that they could do whatever they wanted—and they did—including killing a few of us. The U.N. left early on, and they were right."

Government and "non-government" agencies alike have been feeding Somalia's dependency on aid for almost twenty years. When Siad Barre kicked out the Soviet Union in 1977, a grateful international community, led by the United States, funded large, centralized development projects that the entrepreneurial class of professional Somalis spent more and more time trying to tap. Free food was regularly siphoned off and sold from a string of camps housing Ethiopian refugees and displaced Somalis. During the 1980s Somali mafias thrived on deals involving livestock, foreign aid and food aid. The two warlords who have created havoc for the last two years in Mogadishu and beyond, Ali Mahdi and General Aideed, were both members of these mafias.

"If there had been total anarchy and 2 million people at risk," says Alex de Waal, co-director of African Rights, "then perhaps the U.S. Marines would have been necessary. But that wasn't the case. There just wasn't an understanding of what was really going on." It wouldn't be the first time aid agencies exaggerated "at risk" numbers in order to get attention.

The White House, some in the State Department say, was using "easy" Somalia to try to convince a reluctant Pentagon that the United States should be participating in U.N. peacekeeping operations. "We thought we would come and kick the door in and leave," says a U.S. general barely employed in Mogadishu. "That changed after we arrived. We were here two weeks and they were asking for taxation codes, universities, jobs programs. This is a big day care center. We're not going to disarm. So while we wait for the U.N. to come in, we've gone into meddling, uh, nation-building, by default. We are way beyond our mandate."

The U.N. publicly calls Operation Restore Hope a "half-baked pie." U.N. officials are not satisfied with the level of disarmament. They are not happy that the United States refused to deploy the military in the north. They do not like all the attention paid to the warlords by former U.S. special envoy Robert Oakley. They are appalled at the nation-building. They are tired of all the criticism being thrown their way and are worried that they won't be able to get a handle on Somalia. And they know that if they don't, it will take the U.N. years to restore its credibility.

MARGUERITE MICHAELS, on leave as Nairobi bureau chief of *Time*, is press fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

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Behind Yeltsin's power play.

THE SOFT COUP

By Martin Malia

The Ides of March this year were surprisingly benign. After the December Congress of People's Deputies, we were told Russia was on the brink, her democracy doomed and Boris Yeltsin on his way out. Instead, March brought yet another political resurrection for Yeltsin, a reaffirmation of Russian democratic purpose and at last a determination to help on the part of Western leaders who have dawdled since August 1991. None of this could have occurred without the political shock administered by Yeltsin's gamble on an ever-so-soft coup in defense of democracy.

March produced the third comeback of Yeltsin's career. The first was in 1989: after losing his Party post in 1987 for protesting the half-measures of perestroika, he secured election as deputy-at-large for Moscow by some 5 million votes, and thus became the democratic alternative to Gorbachev's reform communism. His second comeback came in two steps in the spring of 1991: in March Yeltsin fought back impeachment as chairman of the Russian Parliament by the conservative forces that dominated Gorbachev's last year. Then, in June, he won the Russian presidency by popular vote on an openly anti-Communist program. This victory led to the August coup and the collapse of the Soviet regime.

The detonator of the crisis this March was the overwhelming vote of the Congress of People's Deputies to strip Yeltsin of effective power and to repudiate its prior agreement to an April referendum on the Constitution. This left him the choice of capitulation or counterattack. Given his past, the deputies were foolish not to realize he would choose the latter. And once again it worked.

It is difficult to see how any other "reformer" could have done it. And indeed, Yeltsin is not really a reformer, but a revolutionary. In all revolutions—the American one included—the real revolutionaries are a minority, and most of the political class is a great marsh, sluggishly moving between the impulse for radical change and the quest for normality. Hence revolutions proceed by leaps, breakthroughs and backlashes. Yeltsin is a man for all three seasons. Where he is not good is in parliamentary maneuver.

The great breakthrough of the Russian anti-Communist revolution was the democrats' seizure of power in the wake of the failed coup of August 1991. For communism did not just fade away: it was finished off in a countercoup by Yeltsin and the democrats, who exploited the Soviet government's botched putsch against its president to take power themselves and suppress the Party. This action had been prepared in advance, since the democrats fully expected that the gathering reaction during Gorbachev's last year would culminate in overt repression. Yeltsin's radical minority then moved to launch "shock therapy," not just to revive the economy, but to transform the society beyond any possibility of a Communist restoration (see "Apocalypse Not," TNR, February 22). Similarly, the Union, which was collapsing on its own along with the Party that created it, was given an added shove by the democrats in December.

It should only have been expected that these actions would generate a reaction: there were too many vanquished, and not enough victors. This reaction, moreover, would inevitably be driven by nostalgia for the security of socialism in conjunction with nationalist resentment at losing the imperial Union. And it would be populist, since ordinary citizens suffered most from the post-August dislocations. All that was required to activate it was hard times.

Thus 1992 became the year of mounting reaction against the outcome of the August revolution. Small matter that the dislocations were due essentially to the systemic failure of the antecedent Soviet order: they were increasingly blamed on Yeltsin. Small matter, too, that some of the worst aspects of the crisis—notably hyperinflation—were due to the "centrist" opposition in Parliament: they were nonetheless blamed on Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar and his kowtowing to the West.

The reaction was centered in the last surviving institution of the old regime: the Supreme Soviet, or Parliament, and its parent, the Congress of People's Deputies, which possesses constituent powers conferred on it by the late Party for which it has no popular mandate. After April, Parliament, which controls the Central Bank, sabotaged shock therapy by printing money to shore up the dinosaurs of heavy industry. Yeltsin had the uncharacteristically weak reaction of seeking a compromise with the "centrist" majority in Parliament, especially Arkady Volsky's Civic Union. This was in part because he wished to work only within the constitution—Yeltsin takes his role as Russia's first democratically elected leader very seriously—and in part because he reasonably feared massive unemployment if major enterprises went bankrupt too quickly. But this tactic did not work. The opposition's majority grew, and its demands became more extreme.

The conflict over policy thus became a constitutional crisis at the December Congress. Yeltsin's decree power expired at that date, and the Congress refused to renew it. It sought also to establish the supremacy of the legislative power over the executive by making the government responsible to Parliament, not the president. This was quite in the spirit of the still operative Brezhnev-era constitution, which enshrined "all power to the Soviets." And the Congress now passed amendments to hem in the president still more.

Yeltsin at first sought an agreement for power sharing between the two branches of government and a moratorium on amendments so he could get on with economic reform. But when it became clear the Congress would accept no such compromise, he launched the idea of a

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referendum on the constitution to let the people arbitrate the dispute. After much conflict and drama, the Congress ended in a deal whereby Yeltsin sacrificed Gaidar in exchange for an April referendum. It seemed as though a viable compromise had at last been achieved, and that a coherent constitution might emerge by spring.

In the next three months, however, the December deal fell through, and the crisis moved to a climax. The first reason for this was that the overwhelming majority in Parliament and the Congress did not want any compromise; in fact, they wished to destroy Yeltsin and indeed the presidency itself. Of course, they did not put matters this bluntly. Rather, they advanced by salami tactics: first an effort in December to take control of such key ministries as Defense and Interior, and later of television; then the transfer by constitutional amendment, in March, of certain powers from the president to the prime minister, so as to drive a wedge between the two. There were also symbolic gestures, such as voting to keep the hammer and sickle as the national emblem and periodic attempts at Yeltsin's impeachment.

BORIS YELTSIN BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

At the same time, they swore they favored "reform" just as much as Yeltsin did, only that they wished to advance "gradually." In fact, their program was quite antithetical to his: wage and price controls, subsidies and state purchase orders to industry—that is, the pre-August economic order. Their real aim was to halt economic liberalization and, especially, privatization.

Indeed, privatization is the great new issue that has emerged since last fall. The government, under the leadership of Anatoly Chubais, is pursuing "democratic" privatization, which means vouchers distributed to the whole population and the auction of such one-time jewels in the socialist crown as the Zil automobile works in Moscow and the Volgagrad tractor plant. The Congress majority, however, desires privatization by "worker collectives," that is, nomenklatura privatization. So, with Gaidar dispatched in December, Chubais became the next target. Right behind him on the hit list is Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev.

The other major reason for the crisis was the accelerating fragmentation of the Russian Federation in the eighty-nine regions and ethnic "autonomies." Like the separatist drive in the old Union, this movement is a logical, and largely salutary, reaction to the hypercentralization of the late party-state. Only if the old order imposed from above is dissolved can a genuine federation emerge from below, a process Yeltsin has encouraged. But this dissolution obviously carries dangers: it could weaken the central government to where it can no longer fulfill indispensable functions of public order, maintain monetary cohesion and basic infrastructure, honor international agreements or get rid of nuclear weapons.

The constitutional dogfight in Moscow only strengthens this centrifugence, while growing regional power makes it difficult to hold a referendum, or any kind of elections, in order to end paralysis in the center. Various regions might attach riders to a national referendum to expand their sovereignty—just as Yeltsin, in March 1991, added the matter of popular election of the Russian Republic's president to Gorbachev's Union-wide referendum on preserving the Soviet "federation."

In January and February, therefore, Yeltsin consulted with regional governors and concluded that the April referendum either might not pass or would do so in a form that would undermine the very power he sought to strengthen. The perversely resourceful parliamentary speaker, Ruslan Khasbulatov, and the increasingly political head of the Constitutional Court, Valery Zorkin, also applied pressure, since a successful referendum would end the political stalemate in Yeltsin's favor—and no referendum would redound to theirs. By the end of February, it seemed Yeltsin was cornered.

So he sounded out the ministries of Defense, Interior and Security, and once again the regional governors, about the possibility of presidential rule, or, in plainer language, a coup. The opposition dismissed this as bluff. He also approached key foreign governments, and it

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seems they indicated "understanding." But there was clearly not enough support for "hard" emergency rule, involving dissolution of the Congress or the use of force. At the same time, the Supreme Soviet summoned a special meeting of the Congress for early March to frame the referendum in a way to thwart Yeltsin definitively. The meeting turned into an intransigent and vituperative effort to destroy Yeltsin and all his programs. The conclusion was clear: compromise with the majority in the Congress was impossible.

So Yeltsin and his Young Turks organized a "soft" coup. With the military giving him the implicit green light of neutrality, Yeltsin left the Congress in place and appealed over its head to the people with the announcement of a referendum. In adopting this course he risked fragmenting the federation still further; but if he took no action, there was an even greater risk of turning the central government over to Khasbulatov and a chaotic Congress.

The countercoup was adequately carried out, though more hesitantly than in March 1990 or August 1991, as Yeltsin backtracked toward compromise. Accordingly, the political results were also less decisive. Yet Yeltsin did turn back impeachment and thwart what he called a "coup d'état to restore communism." Though this was rhetorical exaggeration—a real restoration of communism is now impossible—there had been an attempted coup to block any further dismantling of the old structures. Those apologists of the Congress who claim Yeltsin caused the current crisis while the Congress was only upholding the constitution seem not to recognize that Russia has no real constitution. Yeltsin's coup has dramatized this fact: as a result, the country might soon get one.

In addition, the democrats have been remobilized, as the pro-Yeltsin surge in the polls demonstrates. This should give him and his team the support to resist further destructive compromises with the significantly discredited Congress. In particular, Khasbulatov and Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi were undermined in the eyes of their own constituents by proposing to exchange Yeltsin's referendum for fall elections, a move that brought an impeachment effort against the speaker.

Economic reforms long blocked by the Congress have been revived. A little noticed aspect of Yeltsin's declaration of special rule on March 20 was his intention of putting private ownership of land to a vote. This is a popular measure. He will also relaunch the fight against inflation, which means getting a hold of the Central Bank, pushing ahead with voucher privatization and strengthening the social safety net.

Still, the basic constitutional issue has not been resolved. Congress did accept a referendum on confidence in the president, but added a question on his economic program, which is distinctly less popular than his person. Even more threatening, the Congress put the threshold for approval at an impossible 50 percent of all eligible votes. So the March crisis will echo in lesser crises as the April vote approaches. In the meantime, the locus of decisive action is moving from Moscow to the vast regional base of the country, where the spontaneous development of what the Kremlin once derisively called "capitalism" is making the revanchist Congress and all it stands for obsolete. And this is Yeltsin's surest weapon in his fight to make the August revolution irreversible.

MARTIN MALIA's book *The Soviet Tragedy* will be published by the Free Press this fall.

Columbia: the inside story.

J-SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL

By Michael Lewis

As you walk through the front door of the Columbia School of Journalism, the first thing you see is this paragraph, cast on a bronze plaque:

OUR REPUBLIC AND ITS PRESS WILL RISE OR FALL TOGETHER. AN ABLE, DISINTERESTED, PUBLIC-SPIRITED PRESS, WITH TRAINED INTELLIGENCE TO KNOW THE RIGHT AND COURAGE TO DO IT CAN PRESERVE THAT PUBLIC VIRTUE WITHOUT WHICH POPULAR GOVERNMENT IS A SHAM AND A MOCKERY. A CYNICAL, MERCENARY, DEMAGOGIC PRESS WILL PRODUCE IN TIME A PEOPLE AS BASE AS ITSELF. THE POWER TO MOULD THE FUTURE OF THE REPUBLIC WILL BE IN THE HANDS OF THE JOURNALISTS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS.

These four sentences are about as close to the intellectual origins of the American journalism school as you can get. They are taken from an article by Joseph Pulitzer in the May 1904 issue of the *North American Review*, the only serious defense he offered of his plan to fund the first journalism school at Columbia. He argued that his school would "raise journalism to the rank of a learned profession" and create a "class feeling among journalists." He predicted—wrongly, as it turned out—that "before the century closes schools of journalism will be generally accepted as a feature of

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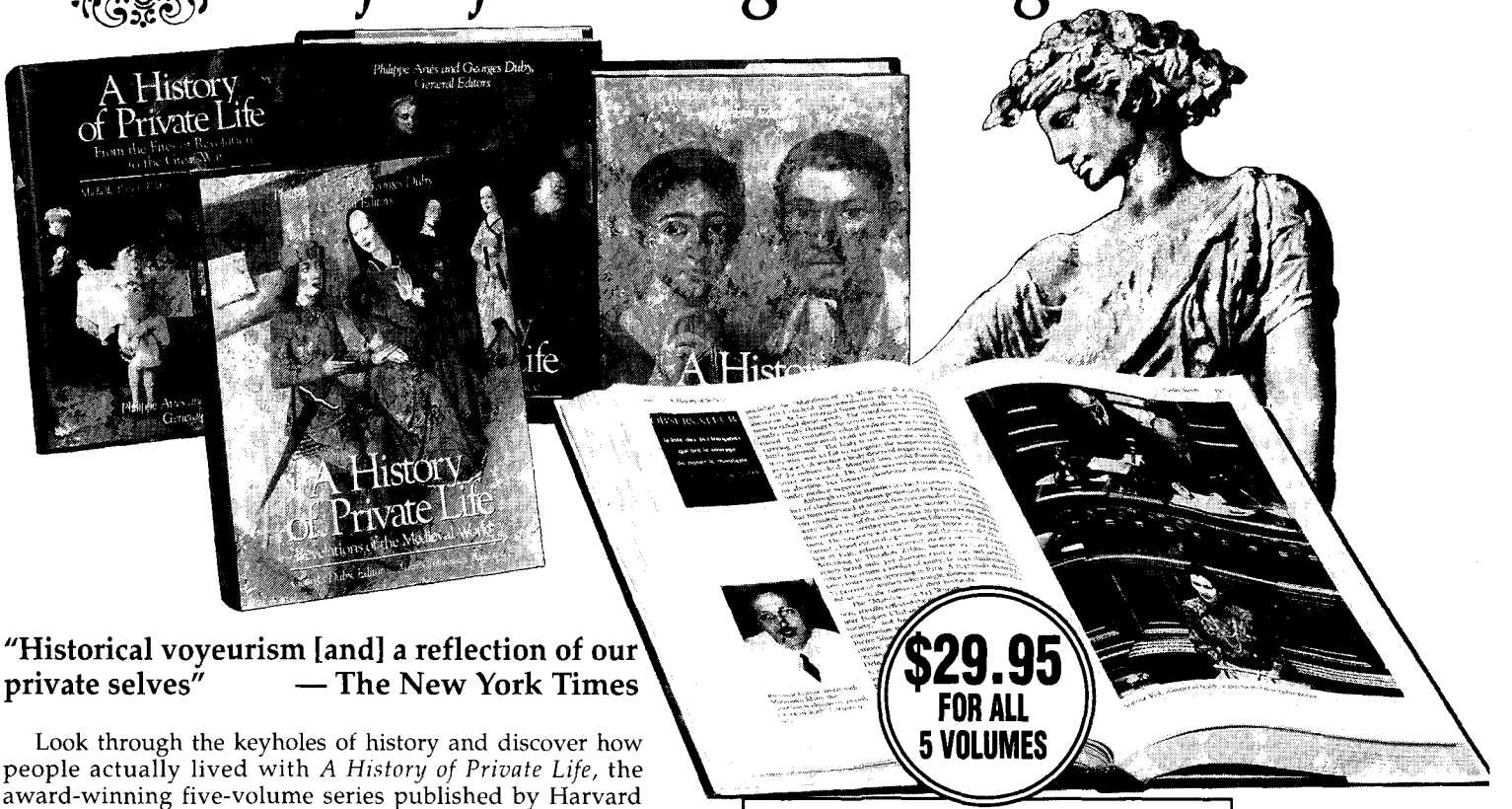
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D. American History	1	2	3	4	5
E. British History	1	2	3	4	5
F. Russia, Asia, the Middle East	1	2	3	4	5
G. European History	1	2	3	4	5
H. Current Affairs	1	2	3	4	5
I. Social/Intellectual History	1	2	3	4	5

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specialized higher education, like schools of law or of medicine," and that the elites of Columbia would band together to cast out "the black sheep" from the profession.

According to his biographer, W.A. Swanberg, the idea of a school of journalism first dawned on Pulitzer in 1892, while he was confined to a dark room, suffering from asthma, insomnia, exhaustion, diabetes, manic-depression and failing eyesight. By the time he actually composed his thoughts for the *North American Review*, his bed chart included rheumatism, dyspepsia, catarrh and a bad case of shame for the Spanish atrocities in Cuba deliberately invented by his reporters to goose the circulation of his newspapers. His wife, a few of his colleagues and the trustees of Harvard and Columbia, who initially declined the $2 million sack dangled before them, suspected that he was not quite in his right mind. A New York newspaper editor named Horace White suggested that one might as well set up a graduate school in swimming. It took Pulitzer more than a decade to persuade Columbia to accept his money. Even then, the critics' main question was never really answered: What would they teach at the Columbia Journalism School? A few weeks ago I went to find out.

The morning I arrived, the associate dean for academic affairs, Steven Isaacs, was putting his class through its paces. A masters of science in journalism requires about seven months of study. The first semester consists of core courses, including a course in ethics taught by Dean Isaacs. The second semester consists of electives with names such as "Developing a Personal Writing Style," "Reporting on Ethical Issues in Science," "Broadcast News: Content and Management" and "Research Tools." The title of Isaacs's course was "National Issues."

The first morning session I attended was given over to an exercise designed to cultivate "the creative side to the thinking process," according to the description in the course brochure. Isaacs removed a UCLA baseball cap from the head of a student named Karen Charman, placed it on the table in the middle of his classroom and told his students that they weren't to leave until each had thought of 100 ideas for articles based on the UCLA cap. For the next two hours there was no sound in the room save for the clicking of the ancient radiator. By the end of the class all but one student had compiled a list of 100 ideas. The failure had come up with just fifty but argued that they were fifty especially good ones.

The next week Isaacs distributed the fruits of the exercise. They ran for ten pages, single-spaced, and began:

men wearing more hats as monoxidil fails
the rise of popularity of caps
baseball caps as appropriate head ware [sic], even for jogging presidents
the appropriate ways to wear a hat

Isaacs then moved from the conceptual to the practical: the actual act of composition. He assumed a position in the middle of the room beside an overhead projector, which beamed short, unsigned articles onto the wall. Isaacs had assigned the students to write sidebars to a *New York Times* article announcing the wedding of Rupert Murdoch's daughter. They now loomed large before us. We read the various efforts while Isaacs, himself looming large in a brown suit and a *Minneapolis Star* baseball cap, swapped the pages in and out. Once we'd finished reading each piece, Isaacs, sounding like a gentle parody of Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*, offered advice about how *not* to write. Early on he had banned from student assignments the use of all adjectives and adverbs, as well as the verb "to be." The students ceded the adjectives and adverbs, but struggled to preserve various forms of "to be," which, after all, had served journalists nobly for centuries. Having lost the skirmish for "is," they retreated and retrenched to defend "isn't." But Isaacs advanced mercilessly, and the class finally agreed to eliminate "isn't," "were," "was" and "has been" from their practice articles.

With a Magic Marker, Isaacs circled a passage in the piece under review. It read: "the term interracial is synonymous with marriages between blacks and whites." "How do we fix this?" he asked.

"Equates with?" suggested a student.

"Uh-huh," Isaacs said.

The article came down. "Now," Isaacs continued, slapping another article onto the overhead projector, "what's wrong here?"

Everyone looked a little uncomfortable. Ises, wases and has beens clotted the prose.

"Is?" someone offered.

"Aside from that," Isaacs said.

The article under inspection concerned the disillusionment of male students at Vassar. (Murdoch's daughter was a Vassar graduate.) Mainly, the piece consisted of a few limp quotes from a single source, a man who wished that he hadn't attended Vassar. Its chief weakness was that it was entirely devoid of interest, probably even to the person who wrote it. Like most of the other pieces, it emitted a sad, dispirited, homework smell. Also, its author had several times confused "their" with "there," and had split a pair of infinitives.

After a few unsuccessful guesses, the class gave up.

"Look again," Isaacs said.

We all looked again.

"You don't see it?" Isaacs asked.

We didn't see it.

"Vassar," he said.

We were dumfounded.

"She's spelled Vassar with an e."

There was a little gasp of silence. It was true. "Vasser" stared out at us, accusingly.

"Those of you who don't own spell checkers, get one," Isaacs bellowed. "Those nits! Those nits are what make the total. That's what journalism is! It's getting the details right. *Get everything right!* Precisely, 100 per-

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cent right. If you can't get everything right, you better question whether this is the right place for you. As Flaubert said, God is in the details."

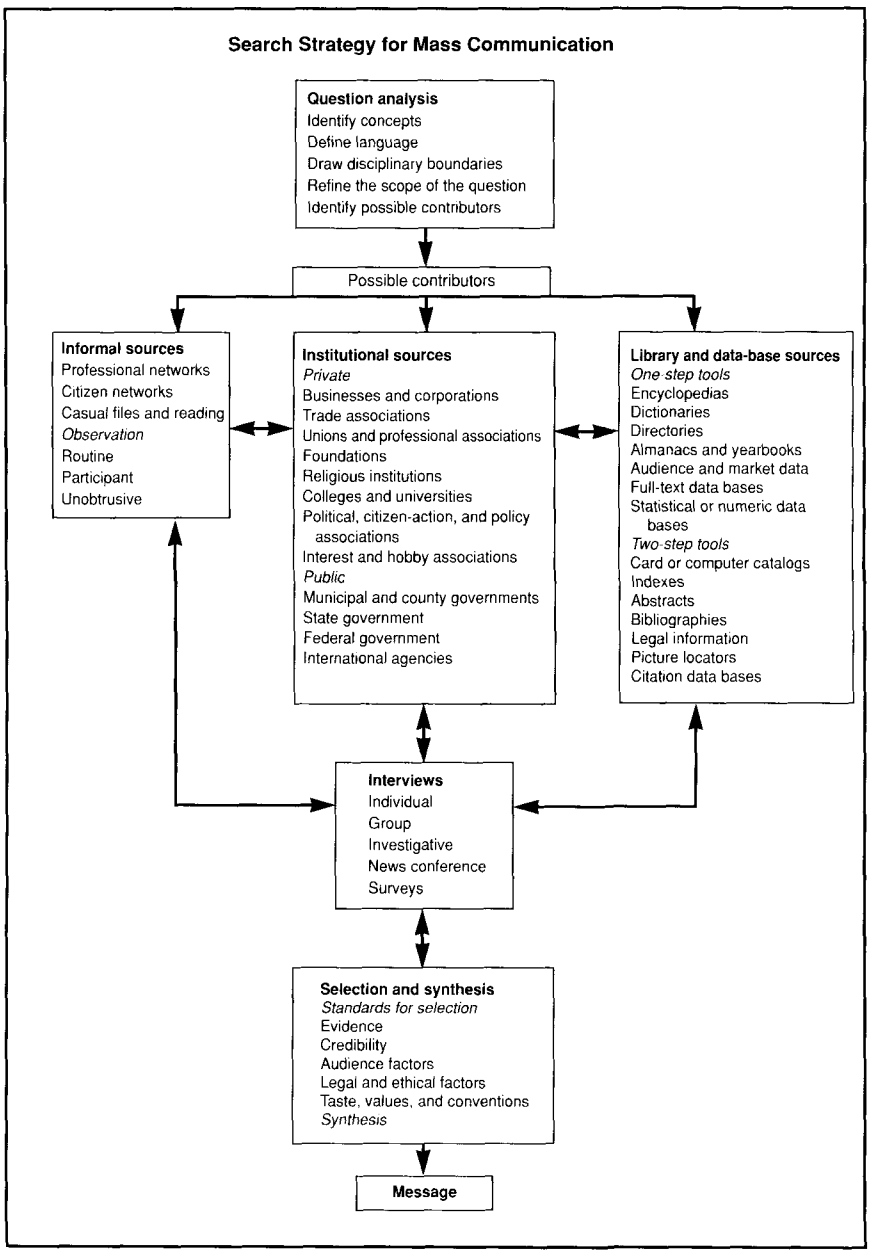
Actually, he didn't. Mies van der Rohe did. Flaubert, if he said anything close, said God is in the *good* details, although even that never has been verified. Isaacs went uncorrected, however, which is one of the advantages of being a dean instead of a journalist. Just about every student was preoccupied with the terrible fear that the woman in the front row who had been shifting around in her seat throughout the ruthless indictment of the unsigned piece was actually going to admit to having written it. Each time she motioned with her hand a silent brain-scream filled the room.

"O.K., I admit it," she finally said. "It's mine. I must have hit the return button, like F3, when I ran the spell check."

"O.K.," Isaacs said.

With a nip here and a tuck there, the inadequately schooled journalist could easily make the Columbia School of Journalism sound like a seven-month extension of this anecdote. Perhaps I am that journalist. The essential point here is that the desperate futility of journalism instruction becomes clearer the closer one gets to the deed. At journalism school, one does not simply report a story. One develops a "search strategy for mass communication" (see chart above). The principal text used at Columbia, in a section called "Truth Telling," offers the mathematical formula: Story=Truth + X. "The story is never the full truth," it intones. "There is always an X, a missing ingredient. Actually there is not an X but a series—X1, X2, X3, X4...." This sort of irrelevant blather infects the entire curriculum. Here, for instance, is how the Columbia course bulletin describes one of the two main core courses, "Critical Issues in Journalism":

> The principal concerns troubling modern journalists are examined in both their ethical and historical contexts. Topics cover such themes as the ethical reverberations in using and being used by sources of news; the debate between lawyers and journalists over codifying standards of journalistic ethics; societal reverberations of stereotyping in terms of politics, gender, race, etc.; ethical considerations in the setting of the news agenda; yellow journalism then and now; implications of corporate giantism in media ownership on journalism; the ethical perils of "beat" reporting; uses and abuses of staging and dramatic reenactments.



The larger force at work here is the instinct to complicate. Those who run, and attend, schools of journalism simply cannot—or don't want to—believe that journalism is as simple as it is. The textbooks, the jargon, the spell checkers—the entire pretentious science of journalism only distract from the journalist's task: to observe, to question, to read and to write about subjects other than journalism. They have less to do with writing journalism than avoiding having to write journalism at all.

It turns out that I am not alone in this view. Despite ninety years of saturation marketing—there are now 414 American schools and departments of journalism, containing 150,000 students—the trade has somehow sustained a robust contempt for the credential. Though journalism schools promise that they will find jobs for their graduates—indeed, the entire enterprise

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is based on the premise that a journalism school degree translates into a desk in the newsroom—many of the people who currently occupy those desks don't want to have anything to do with them.

"Whenever I hear someone went to journalism school I immediately assume they are inferior in one way or another," says Joel Achenbach, who writes the "Why Things Are" column for *The Washington Post*. "All we do is ask questions and type and occasionally turn a phrase. Why do you need to go to school for that?" *Post* editor Katherine Boo agrees. "It's just a huge hoax," she says. "I think how you become a journalist is that you write. You don't see any correlation between journalistic education and an ability to write a story. When you get a great piece, and you call the person to see who he is, he never says, 'Oh I just came from journalism school.'"

Even among working journalists who themselves went to journalism school, praise is not always forthcoming. "There is nothing I regret more," says Joseph Nocera, who spent two years at the journalism school at Boston University and now writes widely. "Two years that could have been spent actually learning something were instead spent at a glorified trade school—I still recall with a shudder the two weeks spent learning how to write an obit—except that this trade school cannot possibly teach you what you need to learn, because it is impossible to re-create the journalism environment in the classroom."

The people who do the hiring in the newsrooms echo these sentiments. "A journalism degree doesn't really carry much weight," says Jeanne Fox-Alston, the *Post*'s newsroom recruiting director. "In fact, we are a little bit concerned when we see that someone has taken a lot of journalism classes." "If you can write, then you can figure out how to write journalism," says Peter Kovaks, the Metro editor for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*. The headhunters at *The New York Times* put it even more bluntly. "It really doesn't pull any weight," says a staffer who works for Carolyn Lee, the assistant managing editor in charge of hiring at the *Times*. "All we care about is ability and experience."

One could go on. When Dean Isaacs worked for *The Washington Post*, he himself used to discriminate against the people he now instructs. "I stopped hiring people from the Columbia Journalism School," he says. "They thought their shit didn't smell. They were a constant morale problem." Now that he's at the school, however, he says he understands the value of a journalism degree. "It teaches you a way of thinking."

Journalism schools, of course, balk at being balked at. Last fall Columbia's placement director boasted to students that 45 percent of the class of 1992 had found jobs or internships in journalism. Perhaps, but to appreciate that figure fully you must know that 50 percent of the class came to the school *from* full-time jobs in journalism. Another 20 percent had internships. Assuming the numbers provided by Columbia students and faculty are accurate, the journalism school redirected 25 percent of the class of 1992 into other occupations.

And the students, it would appear, are beginning to catch on. The evaluations filled out by the journalism students before last year's graduation underscore the problem. Of course, there were a number of satisfied customers—"Excellent! I want to be an active alumnus"—as you would expect from an institution that bestows an award, prize or fellowship upon one in eight of its graduates. And a pair of untenured professors seem to touch their students profoundly: Samuel Freedman, who teaches a course in book writing, and Richard Blood, who teaches basic reporting but puts his fifteen students through a life-changingly rigorous program more like boot camp. (He also happens to believe that the school lacks any real standards: "There aren't three or four of my colleagues who have any business being here," he told me. "I'll be kind. I'll say half a dozen.")

But many more of the students seem to have peered into their futures with dismay. Here's a small sample of the evaluations: "I am totally disappointed with the whole program." "I can't believe I paid this much money [tuition at the Columbia program is $18,000] to come here and I can't get help finding a job." "The placement office was something of a joke, as there were only two or three recruiters who came, most from very specialized journalism (i.e., *Baseball Weekly*)." "The J-school is a farce. The emperor has no clothes." "I find it outrageous that the placement director left in October and students were never formally notified a) that she was gone or b) about progress in the search for a replacement. We are adults who are paying your salaries . . ." And so on.

In the absence of optimistic placement statistics the authorities at Columbia offer a more elaborate explanation of the benefits of their journalism degree: it may not help you right away, but it will help you down the road. "I spent a lot of the time telling people that no, no one is going to make you a foreign correspondent and send you abroad next year," says Judith Serrin, the placement director who left Columbia a year and a half ago. "What I used to say is that people who are out five years make these jumps." The school seems to have settled on this story. Seven students and two professors cited the figure for me, unsolicited. Five years. Big jump. The belief in mysterious yet imminent career jumps has the advantage of being impossible to disprove without the benefit of a team of researchers. Enough able, driven people pass through Columbia and proceed to greater glory to sustain the myth. The question, impossible to answer, is whether they would have made the big jump on their own anyway.

Explanations for the big jump vary, but the consensus among the students is that it happens because of personal connections. "The majority of the people who come out of here and get jobs move up the ladder very quickly because of the network," says a student named

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Ron Spingarn. "They know the right people." Says another student: "They say the connections you make here are worth the money." Pressed on how this happens, she says, "There is an amazing Ivy League door-opening thing that goes on when you mention Columbia." One of her classmates, a scholarship student, adds, "It's not what your grades are. It's who do you know. What professors do you know?" The frenzy of student networking is apparent, especially to the faculty. "When I went up there to teach," says a reporter for *The New York Times*, "it was clear to me that the main reason [people attended] was that the students wanted to meet someone who worked at *The New York Times*."

A few weeks ago, toward the end of the first semester of classes, about thirty journalism students assembled in the third-floor student lounge to compile a list of complaints about the school, which they eventually presented to Dean Joan Konner. They were busily agreeing that the school needed more Hispanics, more scholarship money for African Americans, a more culturally sensitive faculty and more awareness about AIDS, when a stranger crept in and took a seat. The stranger must have liked what he saw: all these prosperous-looking youths so preoccupied with their problems that they were blind to the events right in front of their eyes. Unnoticed, the stranger rifled through a student's purse. The lounge wasn't much bigger than a squash court, so he deserves some sort of prize for audacity.

It was only when the stranger made for the door that one of the students—the woman who'd been robbed—finally noticed him and shouted. The stranger raced out the door, down the stairwell, past the bronze plaque, past the bronze busts of Joseph Pulitzer, past the stucco reliefs of the Gods of Journalism and out into the night, chased by a dozen or so less swift journalism students. Standing near the fateful spot in the lounge where she and her classmates had been sitting, Kaue Noel Kelch-Mattox related the story to me. "We were literally ten to fifteen seconds behind him, but then he just disappeared," she said. "I never would have thought this sort of thing could happen in my own student lounge."

"Who wrote the story?" I asked. The students were required to hand in homework articles each week. The student newspaper was also sorely in need of material.

"No one," she said. "There wasn't a story."

As I pulled out a pad and began to write, students in the lounge gathered around me, along with a pair of young adjunct professors.

"Oh, here comes the notebook!" said one, sounding very media wise.

"What's your nut graph?" asked the other, who was keen to know how this article was going to turn out. I scribbled a note to check the meaning of the phrase, one of the several bits of J-school jargon I failed to understand.

"What happened to the wallet?" I asked my source.

"Why are you trying to find out?" she asked.

"I'm just curious."

"O.K." She looked relieved. "Then there's not a story."

"Yeah," said one of the other students, a little aggressively. "It's just normal here. I keep mugger money in one pocket and my money in the other."

"Oh no," said the media-wise professor, "what you're going to see in this article is a completely skewed position on the crime problem in the school."

The women telling the tale began to lecture me. "So, like, just because someone had their purse stolen is proof that there is something wrong with our school?"

"C'mon," said the other professor, "tell us your nut graph."

I gave up and dropped the pad. "What's a nut graph?" I asked.

"He doesn't know what a nut graph is!" someone shouted.

The adjunct professor took pity. He tried again, gently. "In the article you are writing about the school," he said. "What's your null hypothesis?"

My null hypothesis?

My null hypothesis! My angle. My bias. My take. My ... point ... of ... view!

"My null hypothesis," I said, "is that the Columbia Journalism School is all bullshit."

They paused. "That's a good null hypothesis," said one, finally.

Journalism schools are not alone in their attempts to dignify a trade by tacking onto it the idea of professionalism and laying over it a body of dubious theory. After all, McDonald's Hamburger U. now trains Beverage Technicians. But the journalist's role is precisely to cut through this sort of obfuscation, not to create more of it. The best journalists are almost the antithesis of professionals. The horror of disrepute, the preternatural respect for authority and the fear of controversy that so benefit the professional are absolute handicaps for a journalist. I doff my cap to those who have survived the experience of journalism school and still write good journalism. They deserve every Distinguished Alumni Award they receive, and more.

The first sentence on the bronze plaque that you see when you walk through the front door of the Columbia Journalism School may or may not be true, but it sets a fittingly autocratic, unreflective tone. The second sentence is ungrammatical. The last two sentences offer the sort of grandiose vision of journalism entertained mainly by retired journalists or those assigned to deliver speeches before handing out journalism awards. Highly flattering to all of us, of course, but it would be more true to flip the statement to read: "a cynical, mercenary, demagogic people will produce in time a press as base as itself ... " There's also a small problem: when the journalism school cemented the bronze plaque on the wall in 1962, to commemorate its fiftieth anniversary, it misquoted the text as it appeared in its final, pamphlet form. Those nits! The details! Flaubert! A word of Joseph Pulitzer's is missing, between DEMAGOGIC and PRESS. The word is CORRUPT. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Making Over, Making New

All through the nineteenth century, the British and American popular theater fed on remakes. Busy scribblers in London and New York adapted French and German plays—from tragedy to farce—for the maw of the hungry theater. (George Eliot's companion, George Henry Lewes, did some of this work. For two years he was under contract to a London theater, steadily turning out adaptations.) Some diligent scholar, I'm sure, has done a comparative study to see whether the originals gained or suffered in translation.

And some diligent film scholar, I'm sure, is investigating the modern equivalent, comparing American remakes of foreign films with their originals. The results may be grim. Offhand I can think of only one truly memorable remake, *Some Like It Hot* by Billy Wilder and I. A. L. Diamond (1959). It's a great film, but I don't know its French and German forebears so I can't do any comparing.

Remake River flows on. The latest wavelet is **Point of No Return** (Warner Bros.), remade from Luc Besson's *La Femme Nikita* (reviewed May 6, 1991). First, note that the title itself is a retread. J. P. Marquand used it on a novel that, dramatized, was a Broadway hit in 1951 with Henry Fonda. But there are fresher reasons why this remake seems stale and, I think, will seem so even to those who didn't see the French original.

If Hollywood can remake films, why can't critics remake reviews? Herewith is my plot summary of *Nikita* adjusted to fit *Point*. "Maggie is the one woman in a gang of spaced-out types who break into a Washington drugstore for a fix, are surprised by cops and shoot it out with them. She, zonked under a counter, manages to pick up a pistol and kill a cop. She is sentenced to death. She is given an injection that she thinks, in her still-fuzzy state, is lethal, but that instead only knocks her out. She awakes in a large, secret government establishment. There she is told by an agent-instructor that she will be spared if she will let herself be trained—arduously—to become an operative for a James Bond extrapolation of—apparently—the CIA. (For operative, read assassin.) Detoxed, she is quite bright, understands that they don't give a hoot if she is killed on the job, takes it on after the predictable doubts and failures and, after a period of training, is given her first assignment: a killing in a posh restaurant.

"She brings it off, despite surprises. She gets more assignments, all killings. At last she is deemed reliable to be sent out into the world, to rent an apartment and await instructions. While she is waiting, she meets a young man. After they have entwined, instructions come. The young man is involved. So is the agent-instructor. The script has the requisite twists, and it finds a bittersweet ending."

The American version, by Robert Getchell and Alexandra Seros, makes the woman's training period too short and also ties on a few pink ribbons. In this version she has parents—no family background in the original—and the ending is softened. The agent-instructor allows her to disappear instead of discovering that she is gone. John Badham's direction isn't as steely and cold as Besson's, but it's adequate. What makes this film much less effective is its casting.

Begin with the ludicrous. In *Nikita* the agency had a social-graces teacher played by Jeanne Moreau. Here it's Anne Bancroft, who through her career has been good or less good but has consistently had a touch of the vulgar. That touch is emphasized here by her pretense to polish. In *Nikita* the two men were played by substantial actors; here they are Gabriel Byrne, an actor I had hoped never to see again, and Dermot Mulroney, a newcomer who is not much more appealing.

But the crux is the woman herself. Nikita was played by Anne Parillaud, a sinuous and sexy firebrand, who made the two men's infatuation more than credible. Here Maggie is Bridget Fonda, snub-featured, scrawny in physique and talent. Oh, she kicks and screams when those things are needed, but they're like a schoolgirl's tantrums. She's a glass of milk pretending to be bourbon. Unwittingly confirming her insipidity, the film ends with a huge photograph of her on her boyfriend's wall. Not exactly the face that launched a thousand ships. Maybe the occasional canoe.

Does comparative criticism matter if most of the audience never saw the original? Only if, as may well be the case here, the audience finds something lacking in the remake and wonders why the original deserved another version. Holly-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Groundhog Day. *Pennsylvania. Bill Murray is good, surprise, in an amusing fantasy, surprise, about a weatherman trapped for dozens of days in one day. (Reviewed 3/15/93)* **The Last Days of Chez Nous.** *Australia. Lovely women surround Bruno Ganz in this generally successful ragout of family troubles. (3/29/93)* **Rich in Love.** *South Carolina. A gentle and intelligent sojourn with a man and two grown daughters, as they all discover themselves after the woman of the house takes off. Albert Finney heads—really heads—an endearing cast. (4/5/93)* **Stolen Children.** *Italy. An unsentimental, deeply moving account of an 11-year-old girl, prostituted by her mother, who is sent with her younger brother from Milan to a children's home in Sicily. A young policeman escorts them. Gianni Amelio directs compassionately. (3/22/93)* **—SK**

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Salman Rushdie's first statement after going into hiding; the first, and only, publication of Sappho Durrell's diaries about her relationship with her famous father, Lawrence Durrell.

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wood keeps thinking that if it buys a plot, it buys a film.

The two most important facts about **Just Another Girl on the IRT** (Miramax) are $100,000 and Ariyan Johnson. The first is what the picture cost. The second is the girl who plays the girl—with sweetness and zing.

Leslie Harris, a 32-year-old black woman, wrote and directed the film and deserves hearty cheers for bringing it into being. This is true, of course, of any beginning independent filmmaker, but "of course" doesn't mean we should omit the cheers for Harris. And there's more. She does extremely well in the vitality department. The picture moves bumpily, but it moves, apparently aiming at an archetypal account of a black Brooklyn adolescent today. The pace is fueled repeatedly by bursts of jabber among Johnson and her schoolgirl friends, by chatter at parties, by guff on the IRT. Harris's real accomplishment is in capturing verbal pyrotechnics (often improvised?) and overflowing physical energy.

Two troubles. First, under the details and the rap-music accompaniment, *Just Another Girl* is not greatly different from a lot of white adolescent films of the past two decades. (Parental misunderstanding, sex pressures, etc.) With those white high school films, this post-high school viewer felt as if he were on a sociological field trip; here, for obvious reasons, that feeling increased.

Second, the closing sections—about the girl's unwanted pregnancy, her vacillation about having an abortion, her premature delivery. These are the clumsiest sequences in Harris's writing and directing. Possibly they are based on fact, but sometimes a reliance on fact has the odd effect of making a work less believable.

Still, her discovery of Johnson, her sympathetic unfolding of Johnson's talent, her tapping into the electric current of black adolescence, all these make Harris a welcome new arrival. She got there on her own, so to speak. From now on, I wish her the advice of skilled producers. •

The Mismeasure of Man

BY CHRISTOPHER LASCH

The First Sexual Revolution: The Emergence of Male Heterosexuality in Modern America by Kevin White

(New York University Press, 264 pp., $40, $15 paper)

American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era by E. Anthony Rotundo

(Basic Books, 382 pp., $25)

Havelock Ellis once warned V. F. Calverton, who proposed to write a history of women in several volumes, that the subject would defeat anyone who tried to do justice to its scope and complexity. The history of women could not be detached from the history of the human race in general, Ellis said, without reducing it to something "slight & superficial & secondhand." A serious history of women would become a history of intimacy—"a history of mankind in a more intimate sense than anything yet attempted." "It would require an enormously long period of preliminary preparation, a knowledge of many sciences and a familiarity with many languages." His own *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, he pointed out, had consumed more than twenty years, while James Frazer had given up a whole lifetime to *The Golden Bough*, living the "life of a recluse" and sacrificing "nearly all other interests"; and the history of women, which raised questions "perhaps rather similar" to the ones Frazer had wrestled with, was a much larger subject than either of these others. Calverton's "five to ten volumes" would barely scratch the surface. A "serious writer" ought to "hesitate a very, very long time" before setting off on a journey that would prove endless.

Many years of inconclusive struggle with the subject that Calverton had the sense to abandon have taught me, rather belatedly, the wisdom of Ellis's cautionary words; nor has the rise of "gender studies" offered much in the way of offsetting encouragement. I do not mean to deny that we have learned a great deal in the last thirty years about the history of feminism, the history of women's work, the history of marriage and the family, even the history of love. But the history of women itself—the history that can't be captured by a "strictly ethnographical" approach or "limited to the bald facts," as Ellis put it—remains elusive.

As scholarly attention shifts from the record of women's activity to the "social construction of gender," that history becomes more elusive than ever. Much of the recent work in the field seems only to belabor the obvious: that the cultural definition of womanhood has undergone many changes over time; that these changes ought to make us wary of statements claiming to define women's essential nature; and nevertheless that "gender seems to be a stubbornly ubiquitous feature of culture," in the words of Christine DiStefano, even if we no longer have much confidence in our ability to describe it.

The current outcry against "essentialism" has not discouraged feminist scholars from efforts to explain what makes women different from men. But the effort seems largely misplaced. If the difference is rooted in biology, then it has no history. If it is the product of inequities that have forced women to cultivate the vices and virtues of the downtrodden, then the history of gender tends to dissolve into a monotonous story of oppression relieved only by occasional "subversions" of patriarchal authority. The history of women's activity, of course, is another matter. The record of what women have actually done and said, not necessarily in their capacity as women but in their capacity as workers and writers, adds immeasurably to historical understanding. It does nothing, however, to unlock the mystery of gender.

The same difficulties confront those who now attempt to write the history of masculinity. Books on this subject, most of them flagrantly imitative of similar books on women, are rolling off the presses at a rapid pace. Feminists, who initially resisted "men's studies" as an infringement of their own domain, an attempt to present the oppressor as a victim in his own right, have apparently decided that explorations of masculinity are ideologically acceptable, since they almost invariably "debunk the Marlboro man," as the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reports approvingly. The *Chronicle* lists twenty-eight recent and forthcoming

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books on men and masculinity and leaves us with the sinking feeling that this is only the beginning. The market for self-pity, it appears, is inexhaustible.

Even at their best, it is hard to see how books in this vein can avoid the difficulties already evident in work on the construction of femininity. Kevin White's contribution, which bears an imposing subtitle promising to trace the "emergence of male heterosexuality in modern America," turns out to be a study of the liberalization of sexual morality that took place in the '20s and '30s—a subject long familiar to historians as the "revolution in manners and morals." White seems to have grown more and more skeptical about gender studies as he went along. By the end of the book, he has pretty well decided that "the dynamics of sex and gender alone cannot explain the construction of power in personal life." The "mere study of gender," he says, "may be a red herring in the search to improve human social relations" or to understand the past. True enough; but in that case, what is the point of a book about the "construction of masculinity"?

E. Anthony Rotundo is untroubled by such doubts, although he takes pains to distinguish his approach from that of the "mythopoetic men's movement" led by Robert Bly. He condemns Bly's "essentialism," which assumes that "manhood begins with a timeless, unchanging core of qualities that all men ultimately possess." His own stance, Rotundo wants us to know, is "one of 'cultural construction': manhood is a mental category created and re-created by cultures as they . . . change." Founded on a cliché, his argument contains no surprises. The explanatory framework is familiar, even trite. In the nineteenth century, the story goes (and Rotundo's study is limited to this century, notwithstanding another expansive set of titles), American culture's center of gravity shifted from the community to the individual, and the masculine role came to emphasize careers rather than the responsibilities of a head of the household. The doctrine of "separate spheres" for men and women—another theme made familiar by historians mainly concerned with the lives of women—left women in charge of the family, while men turned their attention to the larger world outside.

Haunted by the danger of being "lured back into women's sphere," they became workaholics and overachievers. The fear of softness, Rotundo insists, grew increasingly troublesome as the nineteenth century drew to a close, partly because men now felt threatened by feminism. They threw themselves into competitive sports and cultivated "primitive" virtues as an antidote to the "overcivilized" habits widely deplored by turn-of-the-century commentators on American life. The word "sissy" entered the language, as a description of everything that men were afraid of becoming. "Confused and defensive," the American male "needed to prove himself a man." This compulsion to be tough, this "turning away from women," has continued to define masculinity, according to Rotundo. A ten-page epilogue, "Manhood in the Twentieth Century," leaves the impression that nothing has changed during the last 100 years: a revealing instance of the flattening effect encouraged by gender studies.

Or is it simply Rotundo's lack of imagination that accounts for the weaknesses of this book—not so much the conceptual framework imposed by gender as the ham-handed way in which he proceeds to deck it out? The subject demands a light touch, a good ear and a sensitivity to subtle shades of meaning—attributes with which Rotundo is not abundantly endowed. He lacks all sense of irony. When a woman wittily refers to the "elemental simplicity of the average masculine mind" in an article in *Harper's Bazaar*, he takes the remark at face value and adds the ponderous explanation that "a new concept of manly reason was

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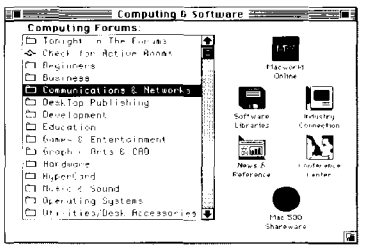

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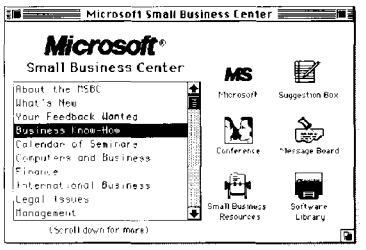

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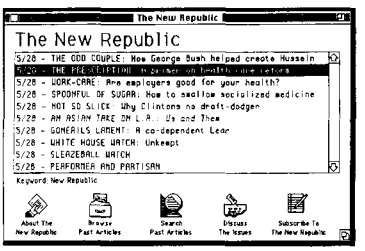

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emerging here." He reads *The Bostonians*, in which Henry James subjected both feminism and anti-feminism to a deftly satirical treatment, as if the protagonist's fulminations against a "womanized age" expressed James's own opinions. He makes the same mistake when he comes across a book called *Haven in a Heartless World*—the "best example," he says, of historians' sentimentalization of nineteenth-century family life, even though the title refers not to the author's view of the family but precisely to the view he seeks to refute.

To blame the notion of gender for such egregious misreadings might seem a little unjust; gender studies, it might be argued, are the victim, and not the villain, of this particular exercise in historical simplification. Still, gender provides a context in which this kind of misreading is likely to occur. Take Rotundo's muddled discussion of the "strenuous life" promoted by Theodore Roosevelt, Oliver Wendell Holmes and others. These men were more alarmed by the declining influence of their class than by threats to their masculinity. As they saw it, men of breeding and family were being shoved aside by unscrupulous spoilsmen and self-made tycoons. Instead of contesting control of the nation's political and financial institutions, the genteel classes were retreating to the sidelines, cultivating an air of amused or indignant detachment.

Roosevelt wanted his class to toughen itself without losing its decency or its commitment to fair play. He called for the "virtue that shall be strong." Rotundo, noting Roosevelt's enthusiasm for manly sports—"gentlemanly contests for supremacy" on the gridiron—misses the force of his adjective. Roosevelt's program aimed to produce gentlemen, not roughnecks and he-men. Similar concerns informed the movement for "muscular Christianity," another attempt to reinvigorate the forces of decency. Rotundo's focus on gender captures only the muscles, blurring the Christianity they were meant to serve.

In the two or three decades before the First World War, the air was full of misgivings, not by any means invariably linked to the decline of Christianity or to the abdication of the old Protestant elites, about the deadening effects of industrial civilization. Life seemed too highly organized, too self-conscious, too predictable to allow for the unpremeditated play of impulse. Industrialism had reduced everything to a routine. The material comforts it provided made people increasingly averse to risky pursuits; they shied away from anything that might disturb their safety or their peace of mind. Science enhanced human control over nature, but it left human beings more fearful than ever of what could not be controlled. Instead of opening up larger possibilities, science appeared to shrink the scope of human aspiration. People were afraid to venture out of the narrow circle of its protection. Dependent on technologies they no longer understood, they were incompetent to manage even the exigencies of daily life. Even their amusements were mass produced. Not only the capacity for bold action, but everyday self-reliance, once the hallmark of American character, seemed to have given way to reliance on organized systems of production, distribution and expertise.

William James touched a raw nerve when he spoke of the spiritual "desiccation" that afflicted the modern world. The apprehensions that became fully articulate in his famous essay "The Moral Equivalent of War"—an argument against war that nevertheless recognized "martial virtues" as "absolute and permanent human goods"—cannot be dismissed as the lamentations of a dying class, let alone as a panicky male reaction to the rise of feminism. To diminish them in this way diminishes all of us—not just the historical actors whose motives Rotundo has reduced to the crudest terms, but also his readers, who are made to feel superior, in their current state of sexual enlightenment, to those who allegedly subscribed to stereotypical views of masculinity in the unenlightened past. If this gratuitous sense of superiority is the best that gender studies can offer, we can probably get along without them.

"The study of gender," Rotundo says, "has been derided as ... an intellectual plaything of feminists which would drop from consideration if not for their political pressure." His book aims "to correct this dismissive attitude." It is more likely to have the opposite effect. A preoccupation with gender, if this example of the genre is any indication, tends to coarsen our sensibilities rather than to refine them. It replaces historical explanation with formulas, rips ideas out of context and often strengthens the very stereotypes it seeks to discredit. It divides the world along a single axis, leaving the impression that every form of conflict can be reduced to the opposition between men and women. Thus Rotundo refers to the nineteenth-century politics of feminism and anti-feminism as if these positions coincided with the categories of gender. "It is no wonder," he writes, "... that men opposed women's suffrage so fiercely," forgetting that many of them favored it and that many women, moreover, did not.

Yet Rotundo himself presents a good deal of evidence, in passing, that points to a different and more interesting interpretation not only of the feminist controversy, but of the widespread criticism of "desiccation." In a chapter on "boy culture," he shows that middle-class boys in the nineteenth century spent a large part of the time in a world of their own, "surprisingly free of adult supervision." They invented their own games and rituals, challenged each other to spontaneous feats of daring and agility, acted out stories of heroic adventure and collaborated in the enforcement of an informal code of honor that stressed courage, loyalty and stoic endurance of pain.

Boyhood patterns of self-directed activity persisted into young adulthood, as Rotundo shows in suggestive chapters on "male youth culture" and "male intimacy." Unmarried men conducted a large part of their education without any direction from adults. They organized debating societies and "library associations," which combined intellectual combat with festivity. "The ceaseless clash of wits between friends recalled the physical combat of loyal playfellows in boyhood," Rotundo writes. "Although the means of expression changed, the basic principle of mixing affection with attack remained the same."

Informal associations devoted to collective self-culture served young men as a "substitute for college," as one of them put it. These societies maintained their own libraries, sponsored lectures and gave their members a chance to test their learning in theatricals or debates. College fraternities provided another setting for activities that enlisted sociability in the service of self-improvement. "We educated each other," one man recalled, "by criticizing and laughing at each other."

By the end of the century, autonomous organizations of young men had either disappeared or degenerated into drinking and eating clubs. Education was increasingly confined to the classroom, agonistic rivalry to the playing field. Formal pedagogy replaced spontaneous play and self-culture. It was not the growing stress on competition that distinguished organized athletics from the informal games of an earlier time, as Rotundo argues, but the subordination of play to purposes dictated by adults. The expansion of extracurricular activities, at every level of the school system, reflected the expansion of pedagogical authority over young people formerly left to their own devices. The dead hand of the educator reached deep into childhood, redesigning life as a "learning experience."

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The pedagogical invasion of childhood and youth was only one instance of a more general campaign to subject formerly unsupervised activities to systematic study and control. The same impulse found expression in efforts to systematize housekeeping and child-rearing, to penetrate the "conspiracy of silence" surrounding sex and to gain access to the inner life through methods ranging from mind-care techniques to the most sophisticated psychologies. The institutionalization of new sciences and pseudo-sciences—home economics, sexology, social work, psychoanalysis, child development, the "science" of pedagogy—reflected an attempt to apply to everyday life the same administrative techniques that had been applied so successfully to the market and the state.

The "colonization of the life-world," as Jürgen Habermas calls it, meant that nothing was to be exempt from pedagogical or therapeutic mediation. Informal, customary and morally regulated conduct was to be organized on a new basis and administered by experts equipped with the latest technologies of the self. If the "life-world" represents the "totality of what is taken for granted," in the words of Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann, then the determination to take nothing for granted, least of all the "socialization" of the young, exposed it to the steady encroachment of organized expertise in the irresistible form of money and power.

These developments undeniably expanded the horizon of human understanding and fostered a critical spirit, but in everyday life they were more likely to be experienced as a subjection to routines that drained the joy out of work and play and wrapped everything in a smothering self-consciousness. Surely it was this feeling of suffocation, much more than the need to prove something about masculinity, that explains the idealization of the strenuous life at the turn of the century: the attraction of imperialism and war, the longing for wide-open spaces, the new interest in the primitive and exotic, the nostalgia for simplicity and lost innocence.

Men were not alone, after all, in their dissatisfaction with a social order in which everything was organized down to the last detail. The rationalization of daily life had similarly depressing effects on women, even though it was often held up as the means of their emancipation from domestic drudgery. Much of the opposition to feminism derived from the perception that it had allied itself too closely with demands for the collectivization of housework and child-rearing and with the "repeal of reticence," in Agnes Rep-

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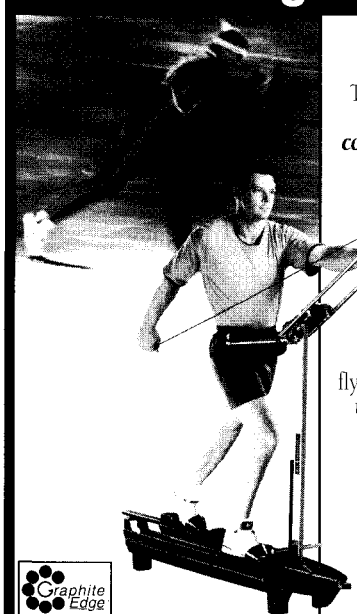

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plier's memorable phrase. A convent-educated Philadelphia Catholic and prolific author of essays now regrettably forgotten, Repplier objected to the rage for sexual disclosure, specifically to the movement for sex education, on the grounds that "vital facts, the great laws of propagation," were "matters of casual concern" to children. Her account of her own childhood evoked a world full of activity and incident, to which adult concerns were decidedly peripheral—a world not so different from the old-fashioned "boy culture" described by Rotundo:

> A child's life is so full, and everything that enters it seems of supreme importance. I fidgeted over my hair which would not curl. I worried over my examples which never came out right.... I imagined I was stolen by brigands, and became—by virtue of beauty and intelligence—spouse of a patriotic outlaw in a frontier-less land. I asked artless questions.... But how could we fidget over obstetrics when we were learning to skate, and our very dreams were a medley of ice and bumps? How could we worry over "natural laws" in the face of a tyrannical interdict which lessened our chances of breaking our necks by forbidding us to coast down a hill covered with trees?

The ascendancy of experts, with their demand that children be exposed to "crude, undigested knowledge, without limit and without reserve," seemed to Repplier to threaten childhood with extinction.

Some of the material in Kevin White's book can be read as further evidence of the discontents attendant on the colonization of everyday life. In the 1920s, White argues, middle-class men began to look for models of spontaneous, uninhibited vitality in the subterranean subcultures that flourished on the margins of respectable society. Writers like Sherwood Anderson, Carl Van Vechten and Waldo Frank discovered in the ghetto an "unconscious love of inanimate things lost to the whites," as Anderson put it—"skies, the river, a moving boat—black mysticism." Frank described black men as "big fellows with flourishing mustaches, bushy brows." He admired their "obscene" and "brutal energy."

Tramps and vagabonds commended themselves to a number of writers for the same reason. In their voluntary exile, tramps lived dangerously, mocked convention and treated women with a casual contempt that women allegedly found irresistible. Harry Kemp, whose *Tramping on Life* later inspired Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, delighted in a young woman's "shrill exclamation of virginal fright, not at me,—but at my abrupt, hungry masculinity." Bernard Macfadden's pulp magazine *True Story* popularized images of men who took what they wanted without waiting for anyone's permission. The Christian gentleman, White observes, no longer stood as the model of American manhood. A mixture of bohemian and proletarian influences contributed to his decline. "Middle-class men were infatuated with working-class [that is, *lumpenproletarian*] sexuality."

White does not explain why the most "advanced" ideas so often inclined toward the primitive; he is content to deplore the rise of "underworld primitivism at the expense of gentlemanliness." It would be hard to quarrel with his contention, drawn from case studies of marital experiments ostensibly based on sexual equality, that men who admired the freedom of the lower orders, as they imagined it, tended to equate feminism with "varietism"—unrestricted license for both partners, with no questions asked. Unions based on these notions almost invariably came to grief. Egalitarian unions worked best, according to White, when they were monogamous and otherwise quite conventional. What needs to be explained, however, is the persistent feeling that something was missing even from a well-regulated, sexually emancipated life conducted according to impeccably egalitarian principles—indeed, that this kind of life in some deeper sense was not worth living.

This feeling is easy to ridicule, especially when it issues in an ideology of red-blooded manhood. As Bly admits in his much-abused best seller *Iron John*, the myth of the "Wild Man"—the uses of which, he argues, have been forgotten in a rationalized, disenchanted world—sounds like a "silly phrase when we first hear it," another name for "irresponsible man or churlish man." To both White and Rotundo, it sounds not only silly but dangerous. "The '90s have seen an attempt to rediscover men's primitive roots," White says, citing Bly; but "a regression toward more primitivism surely is not a solution." Bly's celebration of the warrior ideal, according to Rotundo, has "striking parallels" with the "movement toward primitive masculinity at the turn of the twentieth century."

But Bly's rehabilitation of "mythological thinking" should not be confused with a "monotonously aggressive" mode of masculinity, which he expressly condemns. The cult of toughness and the cult of sensitivity, as Bly sees them, are two sides of the same coin. Both originate in the absence of male authority over boys and young men. If the soft and sensitive male, more attuned to women's suffering than to his own, has failed to make a "clean break with the mother," the predatory male severs the connection only by suppressing the tender feelings that come to be identified, in a culture in which the nurturing side of fatherhood is so little in evidence, exclusively with women. "There's a general assumption now," Bly says, "that every man in a position of power is ... corrupt and oppressive." It is taken for granted, moreover, that women know more about "relationships" than men. When adult manhood labors under such a heavy cloud of suspicion, young men have to choose between equally unsatisfactory alternatives: to become more like women or to embrace a masculine style that leaves no room for love and friendship with members of either sex.

None of this is nearly so threatening or outrageous as it has been made out to be by Bly's detractors, most of whom have obviously not bothered to read what he has written. What he says about the eclipse of fatherhood and its effects finds ample confirmation in the sociological and psychoanalytic literature. His readings of myths and fairy tales are sensible and persuasive. If the men's "movement" nevertheless seems a little ridiculous, it is not because Bly calls for a reassertion of heroism, because he insists that young men can be initiated into manhood only by adult males or because he refuses to concede the "moral high ground" to those who urge us just to "be human, and not talk about masculine or feminine at all." It is because he offers his reinterpretation of mythology not just as a metaphorical elaboration of enduring moral insights but as a program, an answer to the contemporary malaise. He offers it, in a manner reminiscent of Jung, as a cure for souls, a world-saving therapy for those who no longer believe in religion but appreciate the power and beauty of ancient myths.

But aesthetic appreciation, alas, cannot take the place of an authoritative spiritual discipline. Nor can mythology mean for us what it meant to those who took it as literal truth. The critical elucidation that makes it accessible to us simultaneously destroys its value as a guide to conduct. We cannot think ourselves into a state of mind in which the meaning of masculinity and femininity is palpable and unambiguous. In the mythological imagination, these distinctions appeared to be anchored in the eternal order of things. For us, they have become deeply problematic. The controversy about their meaning and significance, which shows no signs of abating, cannot be resolved by an appeal to the inner structure of the universe. We have to appeal instead to the evidence of anthropology, biology, history, psychol-

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ogy and of course to the evidence of mythology as well, for what it reveals not about the structure of the universe but about the human imagination. "Masculine" and "feminine" belong to the growing body of ideas that can no longer be taken for granted.

For that very reason, however, gender studies misrepresent the past when they attribute to our predecessors our own confusion and uncertainty about these matters. The problem for historical study is when and where and for what reasons gender has become an issue. To make it the central theme of history creates the impression that it has been an issue everywhere at all times—the overriding issue, in fact. But gender, like happy families, has no history. It emerges into history only at those moments when it becomes critically conscious of itself. The history of gender, if it aspires to something more than truisms, can only refer to the controversy about gender, which varies in intensity from time to time and from one place to another. For reasons that are important to explore, that controversy has reached a new peak of intensity in recent years. But the passion with which it is debated makes it all the more important to remember that people, even now, are likely to have a great many other things on their minds besides the battle of the sexes.

CHRISTOPHER LASCH is the author most recently of *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (W. W. Norton).

The Rational Mystic

BY ERNEST GELLNER

In Search of a Better World: Lectures and Essays of Thirty Years by Karl R. Popper

(Routledge, 256 pp., $25)

I first met Karl Popper in 1947, if I remember correctly. I was an undergraduate at Oxford, and he had come up from London to address a student society with which I was connected. In Balliol's quad, Popper was introduced to the liberal philosopher and master of the college, Lord Lindsay, who commented favorably on Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, which had recently appeared, but went on to note that Plato wasn't interpreted "here" (Oxford? England?) as Popper had interpreted him, and consequently Plato's thought had not had the kind of impact that Popper had claimed for it.

After his lecture, Popper talked late into the night with Isaiah Berlin and A. J. Ayer, in Ayer's rooms in Wadham. As Popper's host and guide, I was allowed to be present, and was duly awed by the intellectual distinction that surrounded me. I remember Popper reading out loud a passage from Hegel on physics that sounded deep, but that, when read carefully, seemed to say simply that sound was sound and heat was heat (or something similar). The three empiricists and liberals were amused, though I have a memory of Berlin saying that Hegel, at least on history, was not meaningless. Of course I dared not interrupt, and we returned to Balliol after midnight, which in those days was against the rules, and so I found myself in a little trouble with the dean.

Before returning to London, Popper urged me to read *The Open Society*. I did, and wrote to tell him what I thought was wrong with it, omitting to say that I also greatly admired the book. (The idea that great intellectuals might be vain had not yet occurred to me.) He replied with a long letter in which he expressed his sadness at the fact that I was (by virtue of my arguments, not my intentions) a Hegelian. This was not an allegiance of which I was aware. It was the longest and probably the warmest letter I ever had from him.

In truth, *The Open Society* probably influenced me more than any other single book. In those days there were, roughly speaking, philosophers who strove for clarity but were dull, and philosophers who were interesting but barely intelligible. (There were exceptions, of course, but not many.) And here, in Popper's book, was a philosophical work that was utterly lucid, exceedingly interesting and about the real world. The demonstration that these qualities could be combined had an almost stunning effect.

Some years later I joined the teach-

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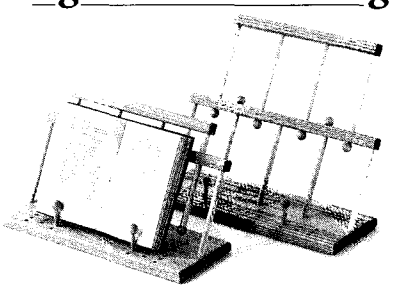

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ing staff of the London School of Economics, where Popper was a professor, and found his seminar extremely exciting. I attended faithfully for a few years, greatly stimulated by the wealth of ideas that flowed from the Master, and appalled by the authoritarianism with which he ran the class (amply justifying the local jibe that his book should have been called "The Open Society by One of Its Enemies"). I was never close to Popper, and so never went through the cycle of discipleship-and-repudiation that so many of his students endured. But I became friendly with a number of them, and from a kind of middle distance I could observe, with fascination, the intertwined intellectual and personal developments. When, for five years, and after his retirement, I actually taught within his erstwhile department of philosophy, I had to observe, with some embarrassment, an attempt on his part to ensure that his own ideas were taught more thoroughly. He didn't mind for himself, he explained, but he had a duty to his thought.

It will be apparent, then, that I have a great admiration for Popper the thinker, but my admiration for the man is less than unbounded. Indeed, of the prophets of liberalism I have met, only a few were personally liberal and tolerant (Russell, Hayek and, with some qualification, Aron); the larger number (which included Lindsay, Lionel Robbins, Morris Ginsberg and Popper) were personally authoritarian. For some time I felt that I had at the tip of my tongue the name of the great figure of whom Popper, humanly, reminded me. His new collection of essays and addresses—which will not, I think, rank among his best work, but casts light on the interrelation of the man and his thought—has made me see who that figure is. It is Tolstoy.

The similarity lies in the passion, and more specifically in the intense polarization of a man's feelings and thoughts into extremes, which he can neither resist nor reconcile. The extremes, of course, are not the same. We do not find in Popper the relentless conflict between the real aristocrat and the would-be *muzhik*, between the snob and the populist, between the pacifist and the romantic of violence in the Caucasus. And the earthy polarities of the novelist are certainly not reproduced in Popper's life or psyche: one disciple who became a bitter critic, the philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend, actually reproached Popper for his lack of mistresses, linking it somehow to his philosophical defects, and contrasting him unfavorably with Mill (not exactly the greatest of libertines, but credited with at any rate one questionably legitimate liaison). Still, if the uncarnal and abstract tensions in Popper's thought are less conducive perhaps to great literature, they are more conducive to great philosophy. And those defining tensions, and Popper's difficulties in navigating between them, are nicely illustrated by this rather uneasy, jagged and inconclusive volume.

Perhaps the central underlying tension of the final decades of the Habsburg Empire was the one between individualistic, universalist rationalism and holistic, organic romanticism. By a supreme irony, the crusty, traditionalist, authoritarian medieval dynasty, linked to a Counter-Reformation dogmatism, was deserted by the ethnic groups (including, in the end, the German-speakers of the empire) but found its last support in the nouveau riche, above all in the newly emancipated bourgeoisie, which was frequently Jewish or linked to Jews, and had a strong interest in the maintenance of a large and ethnically plural unit, and a free market in goods, ideas and people. Popper's work may be seen in terms of these two intellectual and spiritual poles; and it is distinguished by its clear commitment to the rationalist one, from which it never wavered. It was this commitment that gave *The Open Society* its coherence and its bite.

In this regard Popper differed significantly from two fellow-subjects of Kaiser Franz Joseph who also had a great impact on the English-speaking intellectual world. Bronislaw Malinowski had created an entirely new cocktail, blending elements from each end of the spectrum—he joined a Herderian sense of the unity and the value of culture, and of the interdependence of institutions, to a vision of knowledge by total immersion, with an empiricist repudiation of untestable explanatory notions and an insistence on direct observation, thereby creating a wholly new school of anthropology. Ludwig Wittgenstein began with an individualist and universalist vision, picturing the world as virtually coextensive with the range of the language deployed by an individual: what could be said but was not really worth saying, and what could not be said but ached for articulation, was in each case identical in all men, and so significant cultural diversity was not really allowed. All minds, languages and uses of language were actually alike. But in the end he proceeded to espouse an extreme culturalism, indeed an autism of whole cultures as extreme as his previous autism of individuals: the limits of a cultural "form of life," instead of the atomic and atomized ego, now constituted the limits of the world. Popper, by contrast, remained a loyal adherent of *Gesellschaft* against *Gemeinschaft*, and *The Open Society* remains the *Gesellschaft*'s most eloquent, and perhaps its most profound, manifesto.

But Popper is not quite so certain and so consistent on other matters, about which he shows more feeling, more vacillation, more torment—about which he is humanly more interesting. Take, for instance, the question of *Naturphilosophie*. This is a philosophical tradition that, jointly with historicism, attempts to invoke either Nature or History (or both) to underwrite and to vindicate our values, and to be the guarantor of our destiny. A reader of *The Open Society* might very plausibly conclude that its author is possessed by a withering contempt for any such enterprise, that he believes rigidly that we must stand up like free men and choose our values, and refrain from pathetic and feeble attempts at having our hands held by Nurse Nature or Nurse History, let alone by the two of them in unison. But the present volume leaves a somewhat different impression. There is a curious attempt to sketch a *Naturphilosophie* that would enlist Darwin's inclusion of man in nature in order to elaborate a rather soppy version of a liberal social theory, a kind of Social Darwinism in reverse, though it claims to be standing Darwin the right way up, rather than on his head.

Ordinary Social Darwinists argue that because Mother Nature is red in tooth and claw, and because she made us what we are, we should continue her good work and have a very competitive market, or perhaps even competitive international wars. But, says Popper, the incorporation of man in nature, properly understood, points the other way. Men are inventive and strive for improvement, and so the whole of nature, or at any rate the total history of life, illustrates and confirms the victory of innovation and liberty. If this is true, it is good news. Popper embellishes it with some poetry that comes very close to nature mysticism: "*the primordial cell is still alive.* We are all the primordial cell. That is not an image ... but rather the literal truth.... The first cell is still living ... [it] has made a garden of our earth ... it created our eyes and opened them to the blue sky and the stars. It is doing well."

But what on earth does this introduction of animistic, teleological and implicitly Lamarckian language mean? Popper goes out of his way not to deny that "mutations are a matter of pure chance," and though he invokes Bergson with approval, he does not quite come out as an open Lamarckian, nor does he explicitly proclaim himself an animist. Yet all

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this lyrical talk about life doing this or that, striving and so forth, is either a poetic reformulation of the old facts (random mutation, selection, development) or it is animism. The point of this poetry about the victorious, sturdily surviving original cell is partly that such a formulation, instead of offering endless victims and a tiny minority of lucky survivors, bequeaths us one mystically all-embracing Single Unit of Life. It reminds one of the Hegelian Absolute Spirit, except that its inspiration is biological rather than historical.

To be sure, the theory of natural selection explains why so much of life is functional and well adapted. It works as well as the older explanation that invoked divine design, and it does so using fewer unsustained assumptions. That is why many of us accept it. But we pay a moral price: the theory of natural selection also means that for every well-adjusted and surviving individual or species, there is an incomparably larger number of individuals and species who had to perish. We are the beneficiaries of an appalling massacre, which is rather a discomfiting thought. In the long, drawn-out battle between Death and Life, Death is winning by a truly dreadful margin.

Such a moral misgiving about a Darwinian attitude to life is mistaken, says Popper. Life is all one unit, we are all one with the primal cell and so the score is really 1-0 in favor of Life (and Goodness)! Moreover, the score is guaranteed to remain the same as long as any life whatever remains in the universe. The score could only become unfavorable when no one remained to be aware of it. In Popper's hands, natural selection becomes a foundation for a radical optimism.

Unfortunately all this heartwarming philosophical cheer is the product of verbal hocus-pocus. Popper does not deny the cosmic massacre and the horrors, any more than he explicitly affirms Lamarckism or animism. In fact, his Darwinism vacillates between the coy and retractable use of animistic and teleological language, not serious and committed enough to render it testable, and a curious projection backward of the striving that really is present in some men and women. This is not merely unconvincing, it is also intellectually harmful: all this talk about striving and how the love of liberty has been with us from the very first cell inhibits the asking of important questions about the conditions for the emergence of *real* striving for liberty and innovation. Or, more concretely, if the principles of the Open Society were with us from that very first and now so triumphant cell, how on earth did it ever acquire those Enemies? Where did they come from?

Popper was never very good on this issue, and his current *Naturphilosophisch*, and somewhat mawkish eagerness to demonstrate that the universe, or at any rate all of life, is inherently benign, do not improve his performance. But if Popper's new position does not contribute much to our understanding of life, it certainly contributes much to our understanding of Popper. It shows that his old distaste for *Naturphilosophie*, and for the use of certain kinds of empty arguments for the vindication of one's own values, was the expression of a struggle within his own breast, a struggle that becomes manifest in crucial passages of this book.

The reader of *The Open Society* inevitably formed the impression that Popper was not merely inimical to German idealistic *Naturphilosophie* and to the mystical and dogmatic attempts to provide a surrogate religion that would dictate our values, but that he was also, and at least as passionately, opposed to Platonism (though in the case of Plato, as opposed to Hegel, there was at least a fascination with the aesthetic merits of the vision, and the style in which it was presented). There was a firm denunciation of "essentialism," of the view that there are "ideas" or essences in the nature of things, given and somehow authoritative, binding both for our ideas and our morals. This, after all, was the heart of Platonism, and so a firm rejection of it, an uncompromising nominalism, would seem equally to be at the very heart of that liberalism and skepticism that permeated Popper's vision of science and of a desirable society. One is a little surprised, then, by the devotion that Popper displays to the notion of a realm of independently existing abstract objects, which he calls "world 3" (as opposed to "world 1," the world of external objects, and "world 2," the world of experience). It is hard to see how the existence of such a very Platonic realm can be squared with Popper's previous contempt for essentialism.

Worse, Popper's new Platonism seems not at all coherent. His "world 3" appears to contain entities of three different kinds, or endowed with three different kinds of status. First, there is the relatively unproblematic category of artifacts, of objects that men have made in the world. This we might call "human geography," as opposed to the physical geography of objects that are there to be found anyway, whether or not men had been active. Second, there are the intangible, abstract objects of thought. And third, there is, as Popper describes it, "the world that anthropologists call 'culture.'" Popper does not distinguish sharply enough between the second and third of these aspects of his Platonic realm or work out their relationship. He seems to believe that culture explains the origin of these things and transcendence endows them with authority. But is culture really compatible with transcendence?

The whole point about "what anthropologists call culture" is that it is not merely culturally created, but that it is optional as between various "cultures." An activity inherently polluting in one society is neutral in another; an act that constitutes a solemn status-conferring ritual in one society means nothing in another; and so on. Anthropologists are concerned with describing and explaining the manner in which diverse societies construct worlds that are felt, internally,

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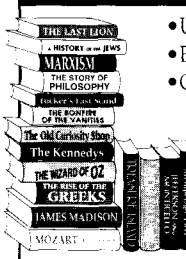

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to be binding and obligatory but are, from the vantage point of intercultural space, nothing of the kind.

Here there is a curious similarity between Popper and Wittgenstein. The latter, in his "mature" philosophy, switched to attributing a "cultural" status to *all* our cognitive and intellectual activities: cultures, though variable and optional, came to constitute the only possible, but adequate, validation of our practices. This lumping together of utterly optional rituals (coronations, to take his own example) with interculturally cogent procedures (mathematics) is absurd and indefensible. And yet Wittgenstein's promotion of the culturally contingent into an absolute does have, for all its preposterousness, a kind of coherence. Popper, too, in his way, conflates anthropological "culture" with Platonic realms (and, to his credit, has a more acute sense of the problems involved), but he oscillates sloppily between cultural contingency and transcendent cogency, having his cake and eating it, too.

Perhaps some defensible position can finally be extracted from this tangle, but it is certainly not extracted in this volume. The book merely leaves one with an acute sense of philosophical tension. Popper's "world 3" is a ripe old mess, lacking the severe transcendence of Plato or the coziness of Wittgenstein's cultural claustrophilia. But for the understanding of Popper, again, something is clear: that the passionate anti-Platonism of *The Open Society* was a case of love-hate, and more love than hate. Such an ambivalence is personal, not merely philosophical, and relates to an inner conflict between the aspiration to tolerance and the apparently irresistible appeal of authoritarian dogmatism, between the striving for modesty and the seductions of gurulike domination. And so the views that Popper dislikes he castigates not as errors but as moral failings, and therefore not owed the respect due to something held in good faith.

Relativism, for example, is described as a crime and "a betrayal of reason and of humanity." Now I, too, consider relativism deeply misguided; and since I believe that there are deep discontinuities in the intellectual history of mankind (a view encouraged by *The Open Society* but not clearly compatible with the *Naturphilosophie* of the new book), I can use some arguments against it. It is less clear, however, that Popper, given his insistence on the unity of all life, can easily avoid it. Similarly, Popper declares that it is "morally wrong not to believe in reality." He is referring to the view of "positivists" from Berkeley to Mach that if all our data is of one kind, that is, experiences, then we can never infer from them to the existence of entities of a radically different kind, that is, external objects, and so "reality" is denied. This is a view that is supported by very powerful considerations. They may be cogent or not, but stigmatizing those who hold this view as committing something "morally wrong," and crediting them with indifference to suffering, human hope and human goodness, is not rational argument.

Popper's consignment of his opponents to the realm of immorality or criminality is difficult to square with his protestations of liberal tolerance. "I have *never* taught in an authoritarian fashion . . ." (the emphasis is in the original). Such a statement can only raise a smile. The apostle of liberalism is possessed by an irresistible need to impose his intellectual will. There are also repeated condemnations of thinkers who set up as prophets; and speaking of his own erstwhile department, he says that "we have never set ourselves up as great thinkers." But a mere two pages earlier Popper gives a list—an incomplete list, he adds—of "problems that I solved many years ago." The list includes:

> The problem of induction in all its guises
> The mind-body problem
> The problem of demarcation. Science/non-science, rationality/irrationality
> The problem of realism

And the other items on the list are no less impressive. If a man believes himself to have solved problems of such magnitude, and at the same time insists that he does not consider himself a great thinker, he simply does not know what he is saying.

So let us return to the passionate Tolstoy. His sexual feelings were so strong that he could not resist making love to his wife, but his puritanism, which failed to inhibit him, induced him to explain to her, then, how very dreadful it all was. Popper's passions are different. He lusts after Platonism, *Naturphilosophie* and, alas, intellectual domination. I had always thought Popper's passion, too, was too strong to be restrained, but that he, like Tolstoy, regretted its power. After reading his new book, I conclude sadly that he is not altogether like Tolstoy after all. Popper seems quite unaware of the passions that dominate him.

ERNEST GELLNER is the author most recently of *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (Routledge).

The Lone Star

BY JAMES M. MCPHERSON

Sword of San Jacinto: A Life of Sam Houston by Marshall De Bruhl

(Random House, 446 pp., $25)

Sam Houston: A Biography of the Father of Texas by John Hoyt Williams

(Simon and Schuster, 448 pp., $25)

The publication of two new biographies of Sam Houston marks the bicentennial of his birth on March 2, 1793. The same date in 1836 also commemorates the anniversary of the Texas Declaration of Independence from Mexico, an achievement sealed by the victory of Houston's ragtag army over the hosts of Santa Anna seven weeks later in the battle of San Jacinto. Larger than life, Sam Houston knew personally thirteen of the first fifteen presidents of the United States (lacking only George Washington and John Adams) and held more military and public offices than anyone else in American history: lieutenant in the United States Army during the War of 1812; major general in the Tennessee militia; district attorney, congressman and governor of Tennessee; general in chief of the army of Texas; member of the Congress and twice president of the Republic of Texas; United States senator from the state of Texas; and finally, governor of that state when it seceded from the United States in 1861—an action that Houston, alone among Southern governors, repudiated when he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Confederate States of America. He did not outlive the Confed-

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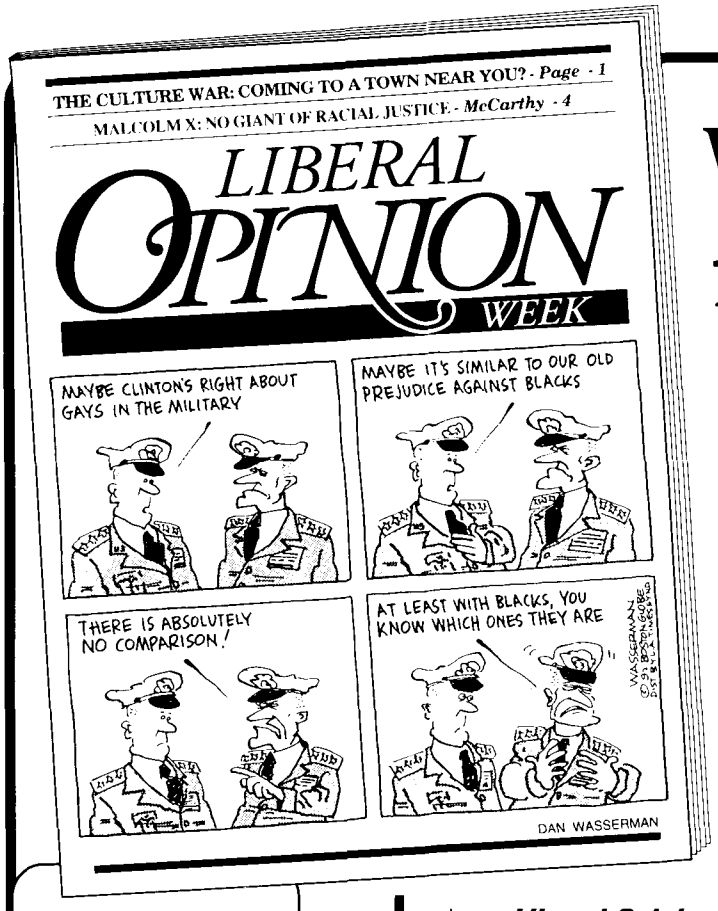
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eracy whose doom he gloomily predicted in 1861.

Houston's rejection of disunion, despite his love for Texas and the South, was consistent with the central theme of his life: American nationalism. His story was in many ways the story of America. Born of Scots-Irish heritage in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, Sam moved with his strong-willed mother and six siblings to Tennessee in 1808 after the death of his father, a Revolutionary War veteran. Restless with his humdrum life on the agricultural frontier of East Tennessee, and fired by the visions of glory and grandeur he found in Alexander Pope's translation of the *Iliad*, Sam ran away to a band of Cherokee Indians when his brothers tried to apprentice him to a dry-goods merchant. Living for the better part of three years with the band, whose chief adopted him as a son, Sam returned to white society and enlisted in the Army in 1813. He fought under General Andrew Jackson against Britain's Indian allies in Alabama territory. Lieutenant Houston won Jackson's lifelong admiration and patronage by his courage at the battle of Horseshoe Bend, where he was wounded three times and given up for dead by the surgeon.

Sam recovered, moved to Nashville, completed an eighteen-month course of law in six months and became a successful lawyer. But he abandoned active practice to pursue his passion for politics—the next closest thing to warfare in the Tennessee of that era. Houston attached himself to Jackson's coattails and after two terms in Congress won the governorship the year before Jackson won the presidency.

Houston's political career appeared doomed by a notorious "scandal" in 1829. He had fully participated in the hard-drinking, carousing political culture of the time and had not been noted for sexual abstemiousness. In 1829 Sam seemed ready to settle down when he married Eliza Allen, the 18-year-old daughter of an influential planter. Less than three months later, however, the marriage broke up when Eliza packed her bags and left, for reasons never explained by either side and unknown to biographers even today. The most likely explanation is a drunken fit of jealousy toward a former rival for Eliza's affections. In any event, Houston's erratic behavior caused a disastrous decline in his popularity. He resigned as governor and, like many others who desired to escape failure, headed west.

For several years Houston traded and lived once again with his adoptive Cherokee family in the Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma), where they had been forced to move by the government's removal policy. Taking up with a Cherokee common-law wife, and apparently sinking into alcoholic stupor, Houston seemed destined for an early and obscure end. But Texas came to the rescue.

A province of Mexico, which had won its independence from Spain in the 1820s, Tejas had been a magnet for immigrants from the United States looking for cheap land. Mexico was glad to accommodate them in order to encourage settlement and development by the energetic Yanquis. But the Mexican government soon had reason to regret its generosity. For one thing, many of the Americans brought their slaves with them, though Mexican law had outlawed the institution. Even worse, these obstreperous settlers—numbering 15,000 by 1832, the year Houston first visited Texas—insisted on governing themselves in defiance of decrees from the weak central government nearly 1,000 miles distant in Mexico City. Houston worked as a land agent and acquired large land grants for himself. His dynamism and charisma during increasing intervals of sobriety soon catapulted him to prominence.

When tensions with the Mexican government escalated into war in 1836, Houston was a natural choice for commander of the forces of the Republic of Texas, which declared its independence on Sam's forty-third birthday. Self-willed subordinates disobeyed Houston's orders to evacuate the isolated outposts at the Alamo and Goliad, whose garrisons were massacred to almost the last man by the advancing Mexicans. In the face of overwhelming numerical superiority, Houston retreated with his tattered, dissension-riven "army" nearly 200 miles to the banks of the San Jacinto, where the Mexican commander Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna expected to annihilate the rebels.

Houston's angry lieutenants accused him of cowardice for failing to turn and fight. This controversy plagued the rest of Houston's career, for his many political enemies kept alive the charge. Both of these biographies, however, make a convincing case for Houston's military acumen as well as courage. At San Jacinto on April 21 he attacked a portion of the large Mexican army during their midday siesta. Shouting "Remember the Alamo," the Texans routed a force twice their numbers, killing many of them in cold blood to avenge the Alamo and Goliad. Leading a charge, Houston was again wounded by a musket ball that shattered his ankle—which should have put to rest the charges of cowardice, but did not. The Texans iced the cake of victory by capturing Santa Anna. Tortured by the pain from his wound, Houston intervened to save his adversary's life, holding him hostage for a treaty recognizing the independence of Texas.

Most men might have rested on their laurels after such a victory. But Houston barely had time to recover from his wound before he was elected president of the new republic with 80 percent of the vote. The problems confronting him dwarfed those he had faced as a general: bankruptcy, runaway inflation, Indians on the warpath, Mexican banditti raiding across the border, ambivalent relations with the United States and other foreign powers, as well as factionalism that threatened to reduce Texas to anarchy. Houston believed that the only solution lay in annexation to the United States, a conviction shared by 92 percent of his countrymen in a referendum on the topic. But Texas was a hot potato on the American political scene, where the potential addition of another slave state (and possibly more if Texas divided amoebalike into several states) became the most divisive issue of the 1840s. Annexation therefore languished until 1845, when the Southern-dominated administrations of John Tyler and James K. Polk finally jammed it through. Meanwhile, Texas somehow muddled along as an independent nation, with Houston as a canny president for five of those nine years.

Sam's personal life took a turn for the better when he married Margaret Lea, a devout Baptist, in 1840. She reformed him into a teetotaler who became a frequent speaker at temperance meetings. But she could never cure him of intoxification with politics, which kept him away from home most of the time during the next twenty years. Nevertheless, Sam managed to sire eight children at two-year intervals almost as regular as clockwork during his infrequent visits home. Margaret never joined him in Washington during his thirteen years (1846-59) as senator from Texas.

These were momentous years, as Sam jumped into the caldron of enkindling controversies leading to civil war. At growing cost to his popularity in the South, and ultimately in Texas itself, he consistently took the Unionist side. Houston never forsook the nationalism inherited from his revolutionary forebears and nurtured by Jackson, whose defiant toast to John C. Calhoun in 1830 was Houston's guiding star: "Our Union: It must be preserved." When disputes over the Texas border provoked war between the United States and Mexico in 1846, Houston opposed with equal vigor the free soilers who would ban slavery in all territory

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acquired from Mexico and the Southern fire-eaters who threatened secession if slavery was not legalized in all territories. Houston was one of only two Southern senators who voted for every part of the Compromise of 1850 to defuse the crisis. And in 1854 he stood almost alone again among Southern Democrats in opposing the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which opened Kansas territory to slavery.

Houston was no abolitionist—he owned a dozen slaves and deplored Northern agitation of the question. But he did not wish to risk the nation's survival to expand slavery. In the mid-1850s he left the Democratic Party and joined the nativist American Party—not primarily because of its anti-immigrant platform but because of its nationalism. Houston was widely touted by his friends for the party's presidential nomination in 1856, and again in 1860 for nomination by its successor, the Constitutional Union party. But strangely for such a political creature, Houston seemed to lack fire in the belly for the presidency and did not try hard for the nomination.

Capitalizing on his still formidable popularity in Texas, Houston ran for governor in 1859 with the hope that he could stem the tide toward secession. Though he won the election, he failed to keep Texas in the Union. In a last act of defiance, he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Confederacy in 1861. "Oh my fellow countrymen," he warned Texans in his farewell address, "the fearful conflict will fill our fair land with untold suffering, misfortune and disaster. The soil of our beloved South will drink deep the precious blood of our sons and brethren." He lived to see his prediction come true, dying almost unmourned three weeks after the twin disasters of Gettysburg and Vicksburg began to overwhelm his beloved South.

These two biographies do justice to the facts and the meaning of Houston's life, if not to its drama and trauma. Perhaps no mere prose can portray the extraordinary dimensions of this man. The straightforward narrative style of both books is lucid and readable, but it leaves some questions unanswered. Both seem grounded in thorough research, though Marshall De Bruhl includes no notes or bibliography (John Hoyt Williams has both), so the nature of his evidence is sometimes unclear. Both refer to "a newly discovered cache" of Houston letters but frustratingly fail to designate these letters in text or notes or bibliography. Neither explains adequately the nature of Houston's alcoholism or the means by which he overcame it. What really made the man tick? Williams tentatively suggests a possible approach to this question by noting the coolness between teenaged Sam and his family, and his adoption into a Cherokee family with Chief Ooleteka as his "father," later replaced by Jackson, who became mentor and surrogate father of Sam's young manhood. But Williams does not pursue this line of interpretation.

De Bruhl is freer of the petty but annoying errors that crop up too often in Williams's book. (Edmund Ruffin was not from Georgia, Henry Ward Beecher was not from Massachusetts, Winfield Scott did not utter "abolitionist sentiments" as presidential candidate in 1852, the majority of Kansas settlers were hardly "anti-slavery zealots" and so on.) But Williams does a better job of analyzing the relationship of Texas, the Mexican War and subsequent political controversies to the slavery question, which gets insufficient attention from De Bruhl. Therefore the reader of Williams's biography is better prepared to appreciate the deep ironic significance of Houston's remark in 1861: "Our people are going to war to perpetuate slavery, and the first gun fired in the war will be the knell of slavery." Indeed it was.

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Making It

BY FRANCIS FUKUYAMA

Tribes: How Race, Religion and Identity Determine Success in the New Global Economy by Joel Kotkin

(Random House, 343 pp., $24)

For many years now it has not been possible to speak too explicitly in polite society about the broad social character of various ethnic, religious and racial groups or to suggest that certain cultures are superior to others in promoting certain economic, social or moral values. To the extent that "civics" is still taught in our public school system, the core teaching has been reduced to the view that other cultures are not "worse," just "different." By and large, academic social science has shunned cultural explanations for economic and political phenomena as well, not just because of their invidious anti-egalitarian implications, but because culture is such a slippery term, much harder to describe than institutions or constitutional arrangements. Underlying modern free market economic theory is a Smithean assumption that rational acquisitiveness is a universal human characteristic; eliminate barriers to free economic activity, and this universal nature will triumph over ethnic particularity.

The shunning of cultural comparisons is quite understandable, since they are prone to crude stereotyping and other forms of abuse. Still, one suspects, even if in an unscientific way, that cultural differences must be significant. Is it just an accident that the Chinese have grown so much richer than the Malays in Singapore and Malaysia, or that Koreans have a better track record starting successful small businesses in South-Central than blacks, or that, with the partial exception of secular Turkey, not one Islamic country has successfully industrialized?

The great virtue of Joel Kotkin's book is that he takes on such questions unapologetically. He makes the bold and suggestive assertion that global economic life in the twenty-first century will come to be dominated by "global cosmopolitan tribes," that religion and ethnicity will be the grounds for economic success. His book catalogs a number of ethnic success stories, beginning with the Jews of Europe and America, and proceeding to the Anglo-Americans, the Japanese, the overseas Chinese and the Indians. Kotkin argues that Calvinist values have been in decline among Anglo-Americans, who are now being displaced by Japanese, Chinese and other ethnocultural groups with stronger work ethics and a more powerful emphasis on family. He suggests that these groups in turn might give way in the future to yet others, such as the Indians, whose cultural resources have not been uncorked.

Kotkin is certainly addressing one of the critical issues of the post-cold war age: now that virtually everyone in the

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world agrees broadly that modern economic life must be based on markets, are all peoples equally capable of developing economically by following the rules of free market economics? Is modern economics, in other words, a truly universal science, as its orthodox believers maintain, or do culture and ethnicity shape fundamental economic responses and thereby complicate or even displace the rational utility-maximizer? Can any country in the Third World aspire to duplicate East Asia's *wirtschaftswunder* by signing on to an orthodox IMF stabilization program, or is there something unique in the Confucian heritage that makes its path not traceable for countries in the Middle East or Africa?

In an easy and entertaining style, Kotkin presents a wealth of anecdotal evidence about the ways in which ethnicity influences economic life. He commendably challenges the received wisdom on Japan of both orthodox economists and revisionists, who see that country's success as a product purely of macroeconomic policies or microeconomic institutions. Drawing partly on secondary sources and partly on interviews with a variety of Jewish, Chinese, Indian, Armenian and other entrepreneurs, Kotkin notes the way in which ethnic ties spanning a wide variety of countries have been crucial to the success of many different kinds of enterprises. The Chinese-owned computer startup company in Silicon Valley can draw on family networks back in Hong Kong and Taipei for intelligence on markets and suppliers; the trust that Orthodox Jews feel toward members of their community is crucial to their dominance of the world diamond market.

Interesting as these anecdotes are, the analysis in this book is often confused, or it fails to go nearly far enough. Take, for example, Kotkin's decision to include the Anglo-Americans as an ethnic group. Following Max Weber, he links this ethnic identity to Calvinism, which he uncritically accepts as the basis of Anglo-American entrepreneurship and the work ethic. When he portrays the economic achievements of the Anglo-American "tribe," on the other hand, he broadens the category to include virtually everyone who lives in Britain or America, whether they were Anglicans, Catholics, Jews, Chinese or Indians. Kotkin cites the large number of Nobel Prizes won by Americans as evidence of Anglo-American cultural vitality, but he fails to say how many of those prizes were won by Americans of English ancestry who had some real connection to their Calvinist roots, rather than by assorted Jewish, Chinese, Indian, Hungarian or other hyphenated Americans. (The latter, needless to say, constitute a very large portion of the total.) Elsewhere, Kotkin credits Anglo-Americans with the creation of the film and entertainment industry, not many pages after having chalked up the achievement to the Jews.

A more serious gap in the analysis concerns the sources of Anglo-American economic success. Among the ethnic characteristics of the Anglo-American tribe, according to Kotkin, is a unique ability to create universal norms, such as the accounting standards now practiced around the globe. He might have gone on to say that this penchant for universalism doesn't end there, but can include the creation of the theoretical structures underlying free market economics and modern democratic liberalism. Why the Anglo-Americans were the first to move in this direction is a fascinating issue that Kotkin doesn't address. But it points to a conclusion that Anglo-Americans were successful perhaps because they transcended any narrow, particularistic ethnic perspective they may have once had in favor of a rational universalism.

This book lumps together very disparate ethnic and national groups, as well as very different types of economic activity. It therefore compares the building of large family businesses by Armenian or Chinese merchants on the fringes of their respective societies to the creation of major new forms of industrial civilization by national groups such as the English or the Japanese. But it is not at all clear that the strong family solidarity needed to operate an international garment business is the same as that required to create and run a Motorola or NEC. Indeed, social scientists have traditionally argued that family ties have to give way to rational bureaucratic forms of organization for modern economic life to exist. The moment that a family firm goes public and becomes a larger, more impersonal bureaucratic enterprise is usually traumatic, and the strong family loyalties that were critical early on do not always play a positive role as the company matures.

Perhaps the greatest disappointment of *Tribes* is its failure to provide any kind of rich or insightful analysis of why particular forms of ethnic identity should promote economic success. One gathers from this book that all ethnic identities foster a roughly similar set of positive values: hard work, strong families, a sense of solidarity and trust that comes in handy when striking deals with a co-ethnic you don't personally know. Kotkin evidently hasn't met an ethnic group he doesn't like: he cites no cases in which religion or ethnicity constitutes a barrier to economic advancement. Armenians, Indians, Palestinians, Mexicans, Muslims of various stripes have the potential for one day duplicating the success of the Anglo-Americans and the Japanese. But surely there must be *some* traditional cultures prone to underdevelopment. If the strong paternalism of Chinese families is the basis for Chinese success, does the looseness of links between fathers and children in traditional African families mean that that continent may not see its moment in the sun?

A more subtle analysis would have sought reasons why strong family ties are apparently functional in China but lead to flagrant nepotism and inefficiency in a Middle Eastern setting. Kotkin accepts at face value the oft-repeated assertion of his Chinese interviewees that Confucianism lies at the root of contemporary Chinese success, without explaining why that same Confucianism produced economic stasis for the preceding 2,500 years. (There is also the rather troubling fact that a thinker as powerful as Weber could write an entire book on *The Religion of China* demonstrating that Confucianism was an *obstacle* to capitalist economic development; and this was a view almost universally shared by Sinologists until the past generation.) Why didn't Buddhism, an otherworldly religion, exert a stronger influence than Confu-

Origins

I wanted to go down to where the roots begin,
to find words nested in their almond-skin,
the seed-curls of their birth, their sprigs of origin.

At night the dead set words upon my tongue,
drew back their coverings, laid bare the long
sheaths of their roots where the earth still clung.

I wanted to draw their words from the mouths of the dead,
I wanted to strip the coins from their heavy eyes,
I wanted the rosy breath to gladden their skins.

At night the dead remembered their origins,
at night they nested in the curve of my eyes,
and I tasted the savour of their seed-bed.

ERIC ORMSBY

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cianism, and delegitimate secular acquisitiveness in China? What was the economic impact of Buddhism's transformation into a this-worldly doctrine in the writings of the Japanese Buddhists?

But the real trouble with Kotkin's argument is more fundamental: whether it is indeed strong ethnic identity that leads to economic success, or rather the opposite—that is, that success is due to the acceptance of a global, cosmopolitan, liberal technological culture and the abandonment of closed and intolerant cultural perspectives. Kotkin uses the oxymoronic term "global cosmopolitan tribes" throughout his book to suggest that only those ethnic groups that accept the mobile, dynamic technological terms of competition in the "global village" will succeed in the end. There is a sense in which this is obviously true: no degree of ethnic solidarity can compensate for a failure to understand the character of global markets or the rules of competition among multinational corporations. But to the degree that this is true, ethnicity cannot be the primary key to economic performance. It is, rather, only an occasional help or an occasional hindrance.

Contrary to the subtitle of his book, Kotkin does not take a clear position on whether ethnicity or cosmopolitanism is the more important factor. On the one hand, Chinese and Indians have cultural values that lead to success. On the other hand, China and India, left to their own devices, were stagnant societies; and it is only the deracinated overseas Chinese and Indians, those exposed to the liberating culture of the world market, who have any chance of getting ahead. After praising the Japanese for those unique cultural values that helped them become an economic superpower, Kotkin turns around and lambastes them for their insularity and close-mindedness. He suggests that they will go into economic decline unless they give up those particularistic virtues that made them great.

In the same breath, Kotkin argues that the Anglo-Americans went into decline when they lost their austere and equally particularistic Calvinism. He notes that today it is the Mormons who are the heirs to that Puritan religious tradition, and that the Mormons' strong sense of community and moral values has been rewarded with a high degree of economic and social success. But then he goes on to assert:

> Perhaps more critical [for the Mormons' future success] may be the inculcation of increasingly cosmopolitan attitudes that could counteract a long history of Anglo-American ethnocentrism and outright racial prejudice, particularly toward Africans. The current rapid transition to a "multiracial model" ... provides intense difficulties for the many Mormons reared in the essentially homogeneous semirural communities across the American intermountain West.

Now, racial prejudice is obviously not central to Mormon economic success. But a strong sense of shared moral values, which necessarily excludes those who do not share them, certainly is. Kotkin's advice to the Mormons would seem to be that they drop whatever made them a distinct and tightly knit religious community and accept the tolerant cosmopolitanism of the rest of American society. But then what would happen to the dynamism and the energy that arose out of their sense of shared moral purpose? In the end, Kotkin would seem to be much more a universalist liberal than a believer in the importance and power of ethnicity.

He might have resolved these contradictions by arguing that the key to economic success is not any particular set of cultural values (say, Calvinism or Confucianism), but the mere fact of being an ethnic outsider in a liberal and liberating society. Both the ethnicity *and* the liberalism, by this argument, are necessary to succeed: the first creates the drive, the energy and the ambition; the second is crucial as a solvent for economically dysfunctional forms of traditional culture, while providing access to the global capitalist market. Being a poor and persecuted outsider can also be a source of strength, because it forces the immigrant into a ruthless self-examination, reinforcing the values that are crucial for survival. One could argue for the importance of immigrant status by pointing to, among other things, the fact that immigrant blacks from the West Indies and other places tend to do much better as a group than American blacks descended from slaves. Older and more secure groups such as WASPs in America face decline precisely because their established social status deprives them of any need to claw their way to the top. By this line of reasoning, the great advantage of the lands of new settlement such as the United States, Canada, Australia and the like is that they are constantly being renewed in their social character by successive waves of immigration.

Much as there is to this line of argument, it sidesteps the deeper and more disturbing question raised by the subtitle of *Tribes*. At least two of the ethnic groups surveyed by Kotkin, the Japanese and the Anglo-Americans, were never immigrants or outsiders in their respective societies. They were, rather, the dominant social group. Indeed, Japanese society is legendary for its homogeneity and its consensus about social values. While Japanese immigrants in the United States have done quite well relative to other ethnic groups, they have not done as well, by and large, as the Japanese in Japan. The Germans are another people who are economically successful, culturally homogeneous and notorious for their historic intolerance of foreigners and immigrants. Of course, the right economic policies were crucial to success in all cases; but the mere fact of being a dominant and secure social group proved no obstacle to economic dynamism. Indeed, in the case of Japan and Germany one could argue that the very homogeneity of these societies gave them a powerful source of motivation unavailable to multiracial societies, while their traditional cultures produced unique ethical values that were crucial to economic modernization.

And even in America, the liberal institutions that freed immigrants from the constraints of their traditional societies were only half of their success story. For the entire period corresponding to America's rise as a great industrial power, the United States considered itself not merely the embodiment of universalistic principles of liberty and equality, but also a Christian Anglo-Saxon nation. Community was based on a set of moral principles that went well beyond those laid out in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and immigrants were unsentimentally assimilated to these more exacting standards.

Their success, it can be argued, was due not just to their liberation from traditional culture, but to their acceptance of an old, uncorrupted Anglo-Saxon one in its place; it was a culture that promoted a kind of individualism that was open to constant innovation and change, but it also—and this aspect is too frequently underestimated—fostered a strong sense of responsibility toward family, community and workplace that prevented the individualism from degenerating into anarchy. Precisely this kind of dense, self-sustaining network could be taken for granted throughout the period of America's rise to the top. It is only in the past generation or two that the United States has begun living up to its universalistic principles by, among other things, essentially exiling both religion and European culture from its public life. Our society will be more open and tolerant as a result, but it may also lose some of those qualities that made it the world's premier economic power.

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"The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews": An Exchange

I wrote *If I Am Not for Myself . . . : The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews* as an engaged attempt to muster help in warding off the Arab war against the Jewish people. I am alarmed by the inroads of anti-Israel propaganda in North America, especially on campuses, where one expects to find a disinterested respect for truth, and disheartened by the ineffectual resistance that people who otherwise pride themselves on their compassion and fairness have been able to mount against disinformation and hatred. Immersed as I am in the study of Yiddish culture—a culture that looked to liberalism for its protection and often embraced it as its newfound religion—I note the strategies that liberals invented during the past century to deny the aggression directed against the Jews, and the accelerating return of liberals to these same patterns today, in the face of mounting political attacks.

For exploring these strategies in detail, I did not anticipate universal gratitude, but I *did* expect the reviewer for THE NEW REPUBLIC to appraise my argument seriously. (Just because I analyze the willful optimism of liberals does not mean that I am free of it.) Instead of a thoughtful consideration of my thesis, Robert Alter (in "Enemies, A Love Story," November 30, 1992) provides a gloss to it—a combination of denial and dishonesty that goes beyond some of the examples in my book.

Thus he reviews my book in tandem with Anita Shapira's historical study of the Zionist resort to force between 1881 and 1948, and sets up a straw hierarchical distinction between the moderate historian and the simplistic wrangler. I doubt that Shapira will appreciate being used as the polish to prove me crude. Nor, despite her unquestionable status as a historian of Zionism, is she likely to share Alter's assumption that it is more honorable to write Zionist history than to try to secure it.

In fact, Shapira's book is the antithesis of mine: hers is about the Zionist recourse to force, mine is about the liberal capitulation to force. Inverting my argument through this linkage, Alter suggests that by protesting liberal appeasement I implicitly sanction murder. He recounts that in 1921, as an act of "retribution" for armed anti-Zionist attacks, a group of young Jews in Palestine killed an innocent Arab boy. Among those who protested the murder was Ahad Ha'am, the ideologue of cultural Zionism.

> I can limn [Wisse's] central argument by saying that its logic would almost certainly have required her to denounce Ahad Ha'am in 1922 as a spineless self-hating Jew who did not hesitate to subvert the Zionist enterprise in order to win the approval of his liberal European friends. With precious little qualification, that is how Wisse characterizes virtually all critics of Israeli action and policies, whether they are American Jewish liberals or Israelis of the left and center, including many who have stalwartly served in three or more wars and have seen friends and comrades perish in combat.

Get a load of that limn! The two main subjects of my book are the Arab war against the Jews and the reluctance of liberals to arrest it. To discount my argument, it is therefore necessary to impugn my credibility as both a critic of Arabs and as a defender of Jews. But it is Alter, not I, whose moral credibility is on the line here. By what right does Alter accuse me of condoning the killing of an innocent Arab boy, or of characterizing as "spineless self-hating Jews" the soldiers of Israel? I will answer only for the book I wrote, not for the corruption that he tries to pass off as mine.

According to Alter, I am not merely immoral, but a creature of dangerous passion:

> The child of a Russian Jewish family that very narrowly escaped the Holocaust, Wisse is possessed by a single powerful idea that is palpably rooted in recent historical reality. It is that the world wants to destroy the Jews, or at the very least is happy to acquiesce in their destruction.

In thus reducing my mind to one item of biography (which he does not even get right; my parentage is about as Russian as Czeslaw Milosz's), Alter identifies me as a fanatic "convinced that every day is Masada." This caricature of me as the product of a deformed childhood intends to undermine my ideas by attributing them to psychological imbalance.

I believe that the true driving emotion of my book is intellectual passion, and I would have expected Alter to recognize its source. It was Lionel Trilling who first drew my attention to the inherent problems of the liberal imagination, and who examined connections between its emotional limitations, philosophic weakness and political treachery. From the works of other New York intellectuals like Sidney Hook, William Barrett, Lionel Abel, Nathan Glazer and most of all from the novels of Saul Bellow, I learned how the strong liberal mind can turn back on itself over and over again, integrating its deepening experience of the world and of its own nature.

But in one respect even these strong thinkers left me uneasy. They did not explain, at least not to my satisfaction, the complex interaction between liberalism and the Jews. For example, although some of these Jewish intellectual elders expressed regret for not having paid sufficient notice to the Nazi war against the Jews as it was being prosecuted, and for having failed to respond to the plight of displaced persons in its aftermath, no one seemed eager to ask why they had failed to react to the murder of their own people. Here were persons of obvious intelligence, who prided themselves on their moral dedication, who manifested courage and independence in standing up to communism, and who never denied their Jewish heritage. How could they have overlooked the greatest crime of the age?

I came to believe that there might be an inherent conflict between the claims of the intellectual life and combating Jew-hatred, between the liberal impulse to seek out the best in everything and the degrading need to engage in political warfare on behalf of a vulnerable tribe. My findings were very discouraging, since they suggested that whenever anti-Semitism increased and intensified, far from coming to the assistance of the Jews, most liberals, including liberal Jews, would probably use their intelligence and powers of discrimination to distance themselves from the battlefield, and to hold the Jews responsible for the war against them. Defenders of the spirit often turned out to be the worst of allies in fending off attacks against the person.

But from Alter's account of my book one could never guess its subject: he says I set out to show that liberals are pro-Marxist and that the left-labor branch of the Israeli literary establishment did not deserve to come to power. Apart from a single chapter, part of which he heard in Berkeley in 1988, he does not appear to have read my book at all.

That chapter was about Israeli writers, and although this is his field of specialization, he appears to have misunderstood even that, perhaps especially that. He says that I fail to see "the symbiotic coexistence in the same writers of sharp criticism and deep commitment," as though I were some kind of appraiser who had come to take the measure of Israeli patriotism and found its writers wanting. I was appraising honesty, not patriotism, and what I analyze in each of the charged political works I examine is the way it distorts, subtly or crudely, the moral predicament of Israel that it pretends to illumine. Alter believes that exquisite distinctions are valuable when they are made about literature. But the most exquisite literature is corrupted when it does not make honest moral distinctions.

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Alter cannot deny the reality of Arab aggression: "One must grant Wisse the urgency of her emotional response ..."; "She is right, of course, in her contention that there is drastic asymmetry in the Israeli-Arab conflict ..."; "It is indisputable that the Arabs have repeatedly used anti-Semitic ideas as propaganda weapons ..."; "Wisse is surely right in her contention that Israel needs friends ..." He *concedes* the nature and the enormity of the assault, but the point of each concession is to accuse me of exaggerating, misdefining, mythologizing the nature of Arab enmity. He is out to prove that my "paranoid imagination" is more dangerous than the thing it identifies, and that combating me must therefore take precedence over arresting Arab aggression.

In my book I argue that anti-Semitism proved to be the most successful ideology of the twentieth century because emerging European nations and emerging Arab nations both found it useful to organize the positive features of their national identity against the negative image of the encroaching Jew. Alter objects to the attribution of "anti-Semitism" to the Arabs. He says that whereas European anti-Semitism flowed from a set of demonizing fantasies about the Jews, "Arab opposition to Israel ... depends instead on observed behavior of Jews." He says that one can readily understand how, from their standpoint, Arabs should have felt the Jews were encroaching on a country they thought of as indigenously Arab. And since the political context of Arab hostility is different from that of European hostility, one should accept the logic of their aggression.

This is a most astounding moral and political proposition. Of course, there are vast differences between Europe and the Middle East, but can anyone doubt that the Germans, Austrians, Ukrainians, Poles, Lithuanians, Frenchmen and so forth formed their opinion of the Jews on the basis of their "observed behavior"? Were the Jews of Europe, with their familial religion, their Yiddish, their concentration in sectors of the economy, their whole way of life, any less threatening to their Christian neighbors than Israelis are said to be to the Arabs today? Certainly most liberals were once prepared to argue for Europeans, just as Alter does for the Arabs, that they were justified in their political opposition on account of the observed behavior of the Jews; and since their opposition to the Jews was reasonable, it could therefore be altered through a modification of Jewish behavior. Well, then? If the Arab wish to destroy Israel can be justified on the basis of the observed behavior of the Jews, by what right can we blame Europeans for wanting to destroy the Jews in *their* midst?

The political implications of Alter's proposition are no less dangerous. Though he accuses me of entertaining a "frozen view of history," based on a series of "rigid either-or formulations," I differ from him in *not* entertaining a frozen view of history, in wanting, rather, to change its course. Despite the overwhelming geopolitical odds against the Jews, and the suffocating rigidity of Arab despotism, I think that liberals should break with their past, and express their faith in the potential transformation of Arab society by insisting that the Arabs turn their attention away from the Jews toward their own self-improvement. Because of the nature of the forces ranged against the Jews, their defense *is* the test case of liberalism, and whether I say so or not, this is how our generation of liberals will be judged.

RUTH WISSE

Robert Alter replies:

Ruth Wisse provides readers of THE NEW REPUBLIC a pugnent sample of her style of political debate, which is to vilify and to impugn the motives of anyone who happens to disagree with her. I do not feel I need to defend either my honesty or my concern for the survival of Israel, but I will observe that in the course of emphatically objecting to Wisse's views, I went out of my way not to question her motives. My brief reference to her personal background was meant to show empathy for her passionate concern with the security of the Jewish people. Indeed, it is baffling that a reader as intelligent as Wisse could quote my phrase, "a single powerful idea that is palpably rooted in recent historical reality," and fail to see that I was confirming the objective grounds for her fears, not attributing them to "a deformed childhood." The term "fanatic" is equally one that Wisse invents, or anxiously anticipates, not one I used or hinted at in my review.

Wisse urgently needs to take responsibility for the consequences of her own intemperate views. Of course, if you asked her, she would unhesitantly say that it was wrong for Jews, in 1922 or at any time, to kill an innocent Arab child. But by seeking to delegitimate all criticism of Israeli actions, she is in fact helping to create a moral atmosphere in which Israelis are encouraged to relieve themselves of anxieties about their own actions by reassuring themselves that their own actions are never the worst. A particularly shocking instance of the tendency in her book is her objecting to the Israelis' appointment of a commission of inquiry to investigate the passive complicity of their military leaders in the Sabra-Shatila massacre in 1982. To sponsor such an investigation, she contends, was to give way to "moral supremacism." "By assuming even a fraction of the guilt," she wrote, "that is not rightly his, the moral supremacist betrays the cause of righteousness in which he says he labors." An Israeli army unit, one recalls, stood by while Christian Lebanese militia perpetrated a massacre that the Israelis, as the power in place, might have stopped. No one in Israel equated the guilt of Sharon and his underlings with the guilt of the actual murderers, but 400,000 demonstrators in Tel Aviv expressed outrage at what they saw as a betrayal of the nation's moral code. The public outcry and the inquiry were a pivotal moment for Israeli democracy. To construe this popular and judicial manifestation of national conscience as a gesture of moral inauthenticity is to denigrate precisely what is most hopeful about Israel.

Wisse trumpets her "analysis of liberal politics," but in fact what her book offers is rather an (invidious) analysis of liberal motives, which is quite another matter. Her treatment of Israeli writers, on which I dwelled, is a telling instance of this general procedure. More generally, I am flabbergasted by her unflinching assumption that only *she* knows how to defend the Jewish people—"to try to secure" Zionist history, as she modestly puts it—and that anyone who presumes to conceive the task of defense differently is guilty of treacherous complicity with the enemy. On these grounds, she willfully misreads me, as she willfully misreads most of the figures she mentions in her book.

There is a real problem of Arab aggression against Israel, as I tried to lay out in the most forthright terms. To distinguish Arab hostility toward Israel from European anti-Semitism is in no way to condone it. Wisse's attempted refutation of the distinction is a vivid illustration of how feeble she is in political or historical analysis. She should know perfectly well that the encroachment on national territory—a properly political issue—was never at stake in European anti-Semitism, for the Jews had no collective claim, and could not have, to European territory. What was—alas, still is—at the root of this hatred were fantasies of racial and moral contamination and of Jewish vampirism. Hatred of any sort is an ugly and scary thing, but different hatreds require different responses, even different early-warning systems.

As Wisse's shrillness, however, moves to ever higher pitches, she seems less and less capable of observing what actually goes on in the historical arena. Thus, in her concluding crescendo here, it is hard to imagine what "liberals" she has in mind (as it often is in her book) who justified European hostility toward the Jews. If memory serves, it was the intellectual right that supplied the justifications. But then she also imagines that my critique of her book is a justification of Arab hostility to Israel. •

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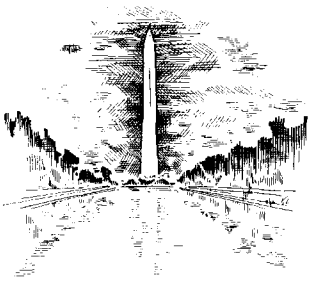
WASHINGTON DIARIST

The lying nose

THE PAPERS CALL MY NEIGHBORhood the city's most "diverse" when they mention it at all—that is, when there's a riot. And, though hardly a gorgeous mosaic, Mt. Pleasant is certainly metropolitan; not cosmetically so, like the Clinton Cabinet, but profoundly, with its lawyers and loiterers, janitors and joggers. It's the only place I know of where Haitian and Vietnamese immigrants speak French in the check-out line and black cops drop by the Korean-run video store to watch kick-boxing movies. Within a few blocks there is a Unification Church prayer-complex, a walk-up Gnostic temple and an Italianate rotunda housing a Baptist congregation. Since I don't speak Spanish, I miss a lot of the street talk, both sacred and profane. But I'll never forget the day a veteran of the Panamanian army, drinking on the curb, promised to look after my recently vandalized car. No one has harmed it since.

MT. PLEASANT'S DIVERSITY IS ALSO, conspicuously, a troubled diversity. In the past two years the neighborhood has endured ethnic tumult (mainly between blacks and Latinos), street crime, a protracted struggle over whether the sidewalks ought to be brick or concrete and the looting of a Church's Fried Chicken franchise on national television. Long after the Mt. Pleasant riots of May 1991, which were touched off when a black police officer shot a Latino man who allegedly lunged at her with a knife, the boarded-up Church's site remains a bone of contention. Residents project their urban fantasies onto the squalid lot: according to a survey taken last year, the poorer inhabitants would like it to become a community center; the more affluent, a bank. Now, amid a series of random drive-by shootings of pedestrians, everyone agrees that the former fast-food factory would best serve as a police station.

THE #42 BUS, WHICH TRAVELS FROM Mt. Pleasant's row houses to the office blocks of K Street, is in many ways a microcosm of the neighborhood. Peering over other people's shoulders on my way to work, I've read the hopeful newsletters of African democracy movements, the dire reports of the World Bank and the entire *Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Everyone from rastas to Reaganites takes this bus, but the most peculiar passengers I've encountered so far were two gentlemen wearing gray overcoats and leisure slacks. As their morning chatter proceeded from the failures of the Washington Redskins to the successes of democratic centralism, it became clear that these blatant Caucasians were, in fact, bona fide American Communists on their way downtown to transact party business. "The leadership may direct us to ally with the social democrats," one cautioned the other. "I'm not sure I'm prepared to do that." When Earl Browder proclaimed in 1935 that communism was "twentieth-century Americanism," he hoped that his followers, with their new enthusiasm for national styles and tastes, would blend with the masses. This strategy doesn't work on the #42 bus.



IT'S BEEN SEVERAL days since the police announced that the drive-by shootings in Mt. Pleasant and adjacent Columbia Heights were linked. Not fitting the usual typologies of urban assault, the attacks have created unusual anxieties. A police helicopter circled the area one night, sweeping the streets with its searchlight. Ambulances wait outside the 7-11. According to the paper, many residents are reluctantly thinking of leaving. And I guess I'm thinking of leaving too. But I'd miss the Bolsheviks on the bus and my window view of a gothic fortress (the National Cathedral) and a lofty aviary (the National Zoo). Each structure is impressive in its way, but the aviary, which resembles a giant harp, is the more heavenly.

COMPILED WITH SOMBER INTENsity, Carole Gallagher's recent book *American Ground Zero* is a guide to the most hazardous workplace in the nation. Between 1951 and 1963 the Atomic Energy Commission detonated 126 nuclear bombs on its Nevada Test Site, only sixty-five miles northwest of Las Vegas; and many more were subsequently exploded underground. Through interviews and photographs, Gallagher tells the stories of test site workers, their families and the unfortunate residents of nearby towns—in the words of an AEC memo, a "low-use segment of the population." Many of their lives describe the same trajectory of good jobs and good wages at the height of the cold war followed by the peremptory dismissal of alarming symptoms, the onset of crippling illness and the government's concerted efforts to escape responsibility. (In a typical catch-22, AEC officials burn a deceased worker's personal papers and then inform his widow that there's no evidence her husband ever worked for them.) Despite some faulty judgments, Gallagher's catalog of duplicity and disease is unnerving testimony to the results of a lethal—and very strange—government program. One of the book's stricken workers used to inspect the blasted remains of life-size mannequins; he also distributed "radiation badges" to local brothels. Gallagher's most striking portrait is of Ken Case, the "atomic cowboy" whose job it was to herd cattle and horses over "ground zero." Although guides to the site deny that any "animal experimentation" programs took place, Gallagher presents much evidence to the contrary. She reproduces a cover photograph from an issue of *Test Site News*, in which Case proudly bears a giant cattle brand. In letters twelve inches high, the brand reads: "A-E-C."

WITH THE NEW WORLD ORDER, like Mt. Pleasant, turned to disorder, disturbed analysts of world affairs are speaking increasingly of "fractal" political systems and the discipline of "post-structuralist international relations." My favorite "intervention" in this field is Diane Rubenstein's reading of the Iran-contra scandal, "Oliver North and the Lying Nose," published in a forthcoming book of essays, *Rhetorical Republic*. In her analysis, the Reagan White House's obsession with "leaks" derives from the "late-'80s McCarthyite hysteria over clean bodily fluids"—an entire "urinal politics." Similarly, Iran-contra's "cancer" on the body politic symptomizes the secret cancer burrowed in Reagan's nose. In a candid moment, Rubenstein admits that linking the question "What did the president know?" to "the president's nose" may seem "extreme or frivolous." But she insists that this nose was "hyperobtrusive" in the Reagan presidency. Ultimately, both Reagan's polyps and the "off-the-shelf" operations of the national security state are "cryptic enclosures" that occupy "clefts in space." (Demolishing the stable delimitations upon which both reason and sovereignty rely, each "crypt" is "an outcast outside inside the inside.") For all the tired elevation of playfulness into principle, this essay is not entirely without its uses: as a footnote to Woody Allen's *Sleeper* perhaps, or as the inspiration for a peace plan. If all else fails, the U.N. might consider offering the Bosnian Muslims a "cleft in space."

ALEXANDER STAR

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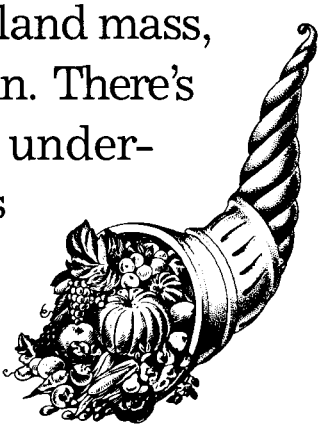

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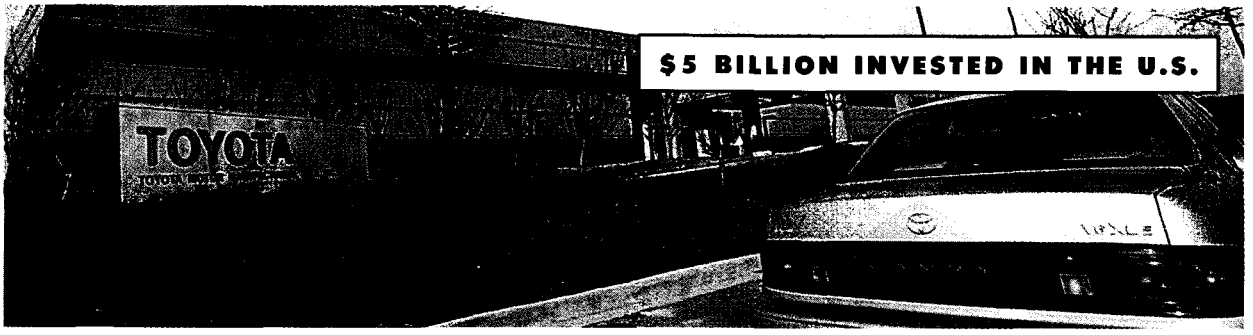

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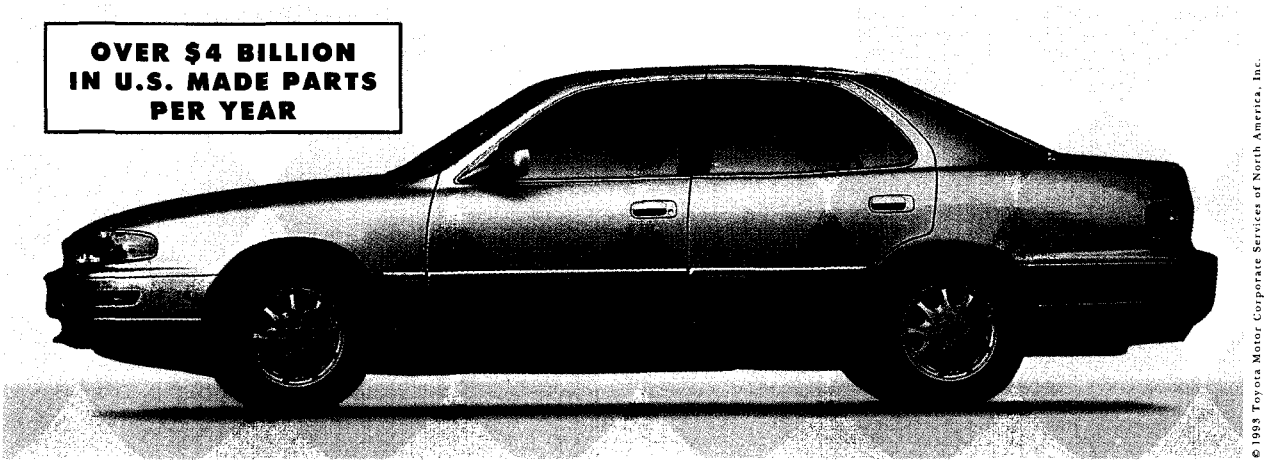

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